

Chess Classics

Isaac Lipnitsky

Questions of Modern Chess Theory

A SOVIET CLASSIC

QUALITY CHESS





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Preface

Isaac Lipnitsky and his Super-book

Two books in my chess library are inscribed with authors' dedications which to me are highly memorable. One of these books, written in my native Ukrainian, is entitled *Selected Games of Chessplayers from the Ukraine*. It was published in Kiev in 1952. Its authors were Isaac Lipnitsky and Boris Ratner. The second book (in Russian this time) is *Questions of Modern Chess Theory*. It appeared in 1956, again in Kiev. It is by Lipnitsky on his own. For me, both these books are associated with memories of their illustrious author.

Returning to Kiev after the Great Fatherland War, in which he had been an outstanding officer (he finished the war with the rank of major – two stripes and one big star on each shoulder strap) and had earned many distinctions and medals, Isaac Oskarovich Lipnitsky immediately made an impact in the chess life of the Ukrainian capital. At that time his rank as a player – Candidate Master – was a very modest one by today's standards. In those days, this "title" – unlike Master of Sport, or Grandmaster – was not awarded for life, but was a rank like the First or Second Category: it was subject to confirmation every three years, and the player would revert to the First Category in case of failure.

But the point is that in those days the total number of Grandmasters and Masters plus Candidate Masters in the whole of the Soviet Union was far less than the present-day number of International Grandmasters in the Ukraine alone! In 1947, for instance, there was not a single Grandmaster in Kiev (up until 1967 there *still* wasn't!), while just four players held the Master title – Iosif Pogrebyssky, Abram Khavin, Boris Ratner and Boris Goldenov. Together with these, therefore, the Candidate Masters constituted the Ukrainian Capital's basic chess strength. It was with this title that Lipnitsky was to become Ukrainian Champion as early as 1949. Then in the following year, officially still a Candidate Master, he performed brilliantly in the USSR Championship final: conceding first prize to the legendary Grandmaster Paul Keres, he shared 2nd-4th places with Aronin and Tolush, both noted masters of the time, while coming ahead of such giants as Smyslov, Boleslavsky, Geller, Flohr, Bondarevsky, Petrosian, Averbakh...

For this success, a fantastic one in the circumstances, the 26-year-old from Kiev was granted the title of Master of Sport as well as his first norm towards the Soviet Grandmaster title (with the

passing of years, such successes came to be rewarded with this title immediately). Unfortunately he did not live to attain his second norm; he was prevented by the lethal blood disease to which he succumbed just a few years afterwards...

In those happy years before his illness, Lipnitsky was already counted among the leaders of Ukrainian sport. But an interesting point is that he did not confine himself to associating with his peers. He would, for example, gladly visit the room where the chess club of the Kiev Palace of Young Pioneers held its meetings. He would watch the young players' games with interest and sometimes give them masterly advice. The author of these lines was fortunate enough to be among them.

It was the spring of 1950. The Kiev Junior Championship was in progress. The participants were First Category Players. Lipnitsky attended nearly every round. One day the game Lazarev – Kramchaninov caught his attention. He scarcely strayed a yard away from the board, and when the encounter ended in victory for me, he congratulated me and asked me if I would annotate it. He invited me to his home, where I made the acquaintance of his parents, his wife and his little daughter. They were all living in a cramped room on the second floor of a large house like a hotel, where on each floor (with ten rooms on either side of the corridor) there was only one communal kitchen, washroom and toilet...

He at once liked my annotations to the game, and included it in *Selected Games of Chessplayers from the Ukraine* which he was then starting to prepare for publication in collaboration with Boris Ratner.

In this little book there were 58 games in all, played by 25 Ukrainian chessplayers in the pre-war and early post-war years. Ten thousand copies were printed, a modest number for those times albeit a huge one today.

Among the games there was my win against Alyosha Kramchaninov. It was annotated in detail by Lipnitsky himself, but to the voluminous commentary after Black's 10th move he appended a note in brackets: "Analysis by E. Lazarev." To this day it gives me great pleasure to read his résumé at the end of the game score: "From the point of view of chess strategy the game was very well conducted by the young player."

But that was still not the end of the matter, as far as this game was concerned! Even before the *Selected Games* appeared, Lipnitsky began hurriedly preparing some of them for another publication that was being brought out in Moscow by the "Physical Culture and Sport" national publishing house. Entitled *Chess in 1950*, this volume was a continuation of the series of yearbooks which had started before the war but had stopped at 1936. After the war, from 1946 onwards, they began to appear again regularly.

For the 1950 compendium Lipnitsky submitted four of the *Selected Games* with his own notes. Three games were from the Ukrainian Championship – and the other was mine. An intriguing detail is that he had made a correction to my annotation after move 10, where in one line I had recommended 11.♖b3. His comment ran, "Unfortunately Lazarev doesn't consider the simple reply 11...♗b6, which gives Black good play." It was in this form that my game was printed in *Chess in 1950* (which came out in 1952). The résumé read: "A pure strategic game by the Kiev Schoolboy Champion, characterizing his play in its best light."

A trifle, but gratifying!

Yes, I had come first in the Schoolboys' Championship. In the summer of the same year I made my début as a member of the Ukrainian squad which took the silver medals in the Junior Team Championship of the USSR. Next spring, after finishing in the prize list of the Kiev "adult" championship, I became (would you believe it?) a Candidate Master, no less! One thing that helped me in this, of course, was my work in collaboration with Lipnitsky, our joint examination of games and opening variations, in the course of which he would set me various exercises on the material we were studying, and I would rack my brains over them.

In particular, I had the good fortune to annotate a few more scores for *Selected Games of Chess-players from the Ukraine* at his request. Of course my notes were only "drafts" which the maestro would then polish up, just as he had done for the Moscow compendium...

All the same it gives me pleasure to this day to read the inscription on the title page of my copy of the *Selected Games*, just above the book title: "To Efim Lazarev, in commemoration of our joint work on chess and this book. I. Lipnitsky, 16 April 1953."

The next stage of our work in collaboration was on the book *Questions of Modern Chess Theory*. This began as a very modest project for a monograph on the Ragozin Defence (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♙b4), an opening system popular at the time, of which Lipnitsky was very fond and which he frequently used with success. We collected games played with this system, classified them and analysed them. Then one day Lipnitsky observed with some concern that it would not be a bad idea if a compilation like this contained a brief preface on the foundations of opening theory, which the accompanying practical section on the Ragozin Defence would serve to illustrate...

So that was how it all started! In the course of working on the "brief preface", all kinds of details relevant to the subject cropped up and captivated the author to such an extent that from the lowlands of opening technique and tactics he struck out towards the heights and depths of chess strategy as a whole. The study of its principles led him to interesting generalizations and conclusions.

The text he proposed to publish expanded further and further, exceeding the dimensions of the original commission and overstepping deadlines for submitting the manuscript to the publishers.

Yet he was granted permission for it all. By that time he was very much in favour in Kiev. As a member of the "Spartak" sport association he had a great deal of influence with its management. Lipnitsky enjoyed the special protection of A. Eremenko. The latter was head of the all-Ukrainian industrial co-operative (then a powerful body with "Spartak" under its aegis), and a great lover of chess.

Lipnitsky would recount: "Just imagine, I call in at his office – he's of ministerial rank, mind you, nothing less – and what do I see on his desk? A chess set and the latest issue of *Chess in the USSR*! He was analysing a game!"

Eremenko helped Lipnitsky with his living accommodation. He and his wife and daughter were allotted a comfortable self-contained three-room flat with all conveniences, in the very centre of Kiev! Later this high-ranking official would continue to extend his protection to the chessplayer.

Lipnitsky was eternally grateful to his patron. In *Questions of Modern Chess Theory* – his new book which was to become famous – he pointed out that in analysing the game Alekhine – Mindeno (Holland 1938), “the Kiev chess enthusiast A. Eremenko” had “unearthed some subtleties which had so far gone unnoticed, and found some possible ways for Black to defend.” (See page 96-97)

Quoting the variations that the enthusiast had indicated, Lipnitsky comments: “This analysis must be valued very highly, for Alekhine very rarely made analytical mistakes. Eremenko forces us to reconsider our assessment of this famous game of Alekhine’s.”

Nor did Lipnitsky forget the author of these reminiscences, to whom he donated his book with the following inscription: “To Efim Markovich Lazarev, with sincere thanks for the help he gave in working on the book – from the author. I. Lipnitsky, 16 March 1956.”

And one further detail: the book’s manuscript for submission to the publishers was typed out by the legendary Berta Iosifovna Vaisberg – seven times Ukrainian Women’s Chess Champion (a record!). The text was read through, checked and corrected by her son, Senia Vaisberg – a First Category player known everywhere in Kiev chess, both for his phenomenal erudition and for his fantastic eccentricities. One day when Lipnitsky visited him at home to collect the proofs, Senia said:

“Why do you write that in some critical positions there aren’t any chess laws that apply? I mean, if some laws *don’t* apply, it means there are others that *do*!”

Lipnitsky was delighted! Thanking Senia, he promptly reworked an entire section in accordance with this advice.

The book came off the printing press in 1956, and the whole edition was instantly bought up by enthusiasts. In the same year Lipnitsky became Champion of the Ukraine for the second time. However, his pleasure was soon to be marred by acute pains which no medical treatment could remedy. It was said that he must somewhere have been exposed to some form of radioactive rain and had contracted leukaemia, for which there was then no cure.

Three years of torment, at home and in hospitals – and then the funeral at the end of March 1959, at Baikov cemetery. He had only lived for a little more than 36 years. Incidentally, almost exactly three years later, who do you think succumbed quickly to what would seem to have been exactly the same form of radiation? It was Grandmaster Ragozin himself, the author of the opening system to which Lipnitsky devoted his work. But then, the patriarch was over 53...

Lipnitsky’s best memorial is his *Questions of Modern Chess Theory*. To those questions, the book gives many striking and convincing answers. To this day it remains one of the world’s best hand-books for the strategy of the “game of the wise”.

Efim Lazarev, Master of Sport
Kiev 2008

Foreword

Habent sua fata libelli – “Books have their own destiny.” This was said in the ancient world. The destiny of Isaac Oskarovich Lipnitsky’s book *Questions of Modern Chess Theory* is one that you would not by any means call happy. It is something of a legend, yet enigmatic and inexplicable. For all that, the destiny of the book has been far happier than that of its author...

The Great Fatherland War was over. The decorated front-line soldier Isaac Lipnitsky was returning to peacetime life. In 1950 he had his moment of glory: in the final of the 18th Soviet Championship Lipnitsky shared 2nd-4th places, finishing only behind Keres and outperforming Smyslov, Petrosian, Geller, Averbakh... He was only 27, he had his whole life ahead of him, his career was taking off, he was sure to become one of the best players in the country ... but already a terrible illness was looming. It too was ready to make its most powerful move.

Isaac Oskarovich was to die in 1959, having lived a mere 36 years. He took part in one more USSR Championship final, but was no longer able to concentrate on the game properly. Fully aware of what was happening, Lipnitsky gradually withdrew from practical play. He taught – and wrote his book.

Appearing in 1956, it was on the sidelines in every respect: it was published in Kiev, in a small edition (by Soviet standards of course) and with many misprints. From the very moment of its appearance the book seemed condemned to oblivion. But ... something extraordinary ensued.

“Lipnitsky recommends...”, “in Lipnitsky’s view...” – we find such utterances in the works of Botvinnik and Fischer. Two great Champions, so unlike each other, took Lipnitsky’s book very seriously. “Widely known within narrow circles”, inaccessible to the mass of readers, the book occupied a place of honour in the home libraries of grandmasters and coaches. Yet it aroused perhaps the greatest enthusiasm in people who ... had never read it, but had only heard about it or seen individual chapters which someone had adapted. The book was becoming a legend. What then is so special about it?

In a striking, indeed fantastic way, it is the reverse of banal. Have a browse and read through any two pages at random, and you will see this for yourself. There are some books – conscientious compilations – whose authors strive to convince you that two and two make four and the Volga flows into the Caspian Sea. And then there are some books which stimulate thought.

Such a book is the one before you. Fifty years from the day of its first appearance, it has found its second birth.

Anatoly Karpov
World Champion 1975-85, FIDE World Champion 1993-9

Foreword by the UK Publisher

Time has moved on since Isaac Lipnitsky wrote *Questions of Modern Chess Theory*. This can be seen if you look at the theory of the Botvinnik variation of the Semi-Slav as given on page 141 and compare with the latest issue of Chess Informant. Or if you read Chapter 15 “How long does a Novelty last?” In Lipnitsky’s era a new move might remain secret for many months, while in our Internet-infested age information is updated continuously, in chess as in other areas of life.

But there is a great difference between merely acquiring information and achieving real understanding. In this book you will find much that is as vibrant and relevant as ever, because Lipnitsky wrote with intelligence and lucidity. He was a champion who could play chess and also explain how he played chess. Technology might have changed the way we look at chess, but the pieces still move in the same way they did sixty years ago.

Many highly acclaimed modern chess writers, especially those from Eastern Europe, proudly acknowledge Lipnitsky’s influence on their work. Though he does not have the name-recognition in the West of such established brands as Nimzowitsch, Reti or Kotov, he is worthy of a place in the pantheon. Studying Lipnitsky will make it easier for the reader to make the leap from the ideas of Nimzowitsch to works by Lipnitsky’s modern admirers such as, to choose just one example, those of Mark Dvoretsky.

As Anatoly Karpov mentions in the Foreword, the great Bobby Fischer quoted Lipnitsky’s views in *My 60 Memorable Games*. This is natural: every chess thinker builds on the efforts of the previous generation. However, Fischer had to learn Russian to reap the benefit. For the less linguistically gifted, the lack of an English translation of *Questions of Modern Chess Theory* left a missing link in the chain of thought.

Russian International Master Ilya Odessky extensively edited this edition of Lipnitsky’s “Superbook” with a 21st century audience in mind. The original edition from 1956 included about 120 pages of analysis on the Ragozin variation of the Queen’s Gambit, for which Lipnitsky held much affection (see for example page 189), but which held little relevance to a modern reader. This opening is still defended by top class players such as Carlsen, Mamedyarov, Morozevich and so on, but the theory now is obviously quite different.

Quality Chess was founded four years ago in order to make a contribution to chess literature, one specific plan being to publish this book in English. Thanks to the help of our Russian partners this is finally a reality. I hope that the reader will agree with the greatest players of the last half-century that *Questions of Modern Chess Theory* is a Soviet classic, if not *the* Soviet Classic.

John Shaw
Quality Chess

Introduction

This book focuses on those general problems of opening and middlegame theory which are of paramount importance for a player to understand properly in order to manage a game successfully. Under this heading we should place the problems of the centre, mobilization of the pieces and the initiative. These problems do not exist by themselves, in isolation from each other; in various forms they are closely interwoven.

The basis for a game of chess is a purposeful plan which, beginning in the opening, is consistently developed in the middlegame. A highly characteristic feature of modern opening play is that from the very start of the game the players will try to predetermine the channels in which the middlegame fight will be conducted. Thus the link between opening and middlegame is of topical significance.

Together with these issues, we shall consider the problem of assessing a position and analysing – undoubtedly the paramount question of chess theory. It should be borne in mind that any of these problems can only be studied successfully given a critical, imaginative approach to them. In the examples cited in the text, very extensive use is made of the work and achievements of Alexander Alekhine and Mikhail Botvinnik. Their merit in presenting and resolving the problems of the opening in contemporary terms is especially great.

Chapter 1

On the Opening

The opening is the initial stage of the game. This definition of the opening as such dates from the second half of the 15th century, which saw the transformation of the Arabian *shatranj* into the modern game of chess. Let us recall that *shatranj* was played with the same pieces on the same board as the modern game, but with somewhat different rules.

Thus for example the movements of the pieces according to the rules of *shatranj* were extremely slow (the queen moved only one square along the diagonal, there was no castling, etc.) and it took a great deal of time for the opposing forces to come into contact. As a result, openings in the modern sense of the word were absent from the Arab game in the final centuries of its existence. A thousand years ago, play would begin not from the original starting position but from one where the initial development was already completed.

Thirty-one such positions have come down to us. They were called *tabiyat*. In addition each *tabiya* had a name of its own.

Diagram 1

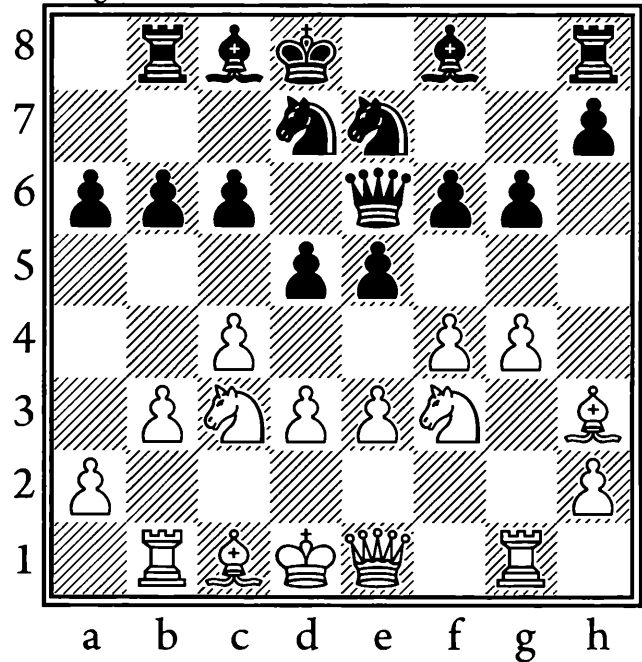
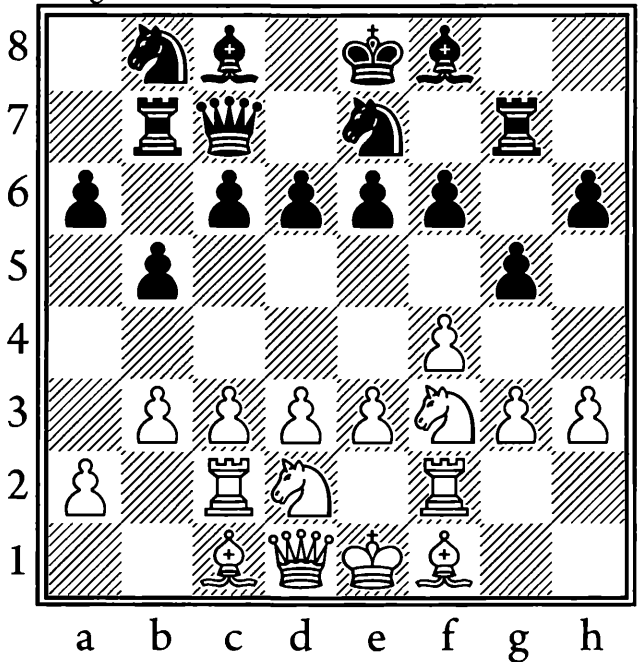


Diagram 2



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Chapter 2

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Thirty-one such positions have come down to us. They were called *tabiyat*. In addition each *tabiya* had a name of its own.

When the modification of the rules of *shatranj* had created modern chess, with its possibilities for fast development of the pieces at the start of the game, *tabiyat* were no longer needed. But at once the question arose as to how the

pieces were to be developed correctly. From attempts to find an answer to this question, the study of chess openings arose.

The opening has been an object of special attention for chessplayers for close on 500 years. Small wonder that openings were a major topic in the very first chess books to appear. Thus for example in the Göttingen Manuscript (a text of French origin dating from around 1490, discovered in Göttingen University library), thirty parchment pages are devoted to twelve different openings, including those now called the Petroff, the Ruy Lopez, the Giuoco Piano, the French Defence, the English Opening, the Queen's Gambit and others.

Dozens of books devoted to chess openings have been written since; hardly a single contemporary chess author passes over the questions of the opening. Yet even today no unanimity has been reached on the treatment of the basic opening problems.

Questions about the tasks and aims of the opening, and the chief principles and methods of playing it; the question of how long the opening lasts, and how it is linked to the middlegame; these questions remain topical. It is therefore important to explain what is characteristic and distinctive about the

modern approach to solving the various opening problems.

The opening as distinct from the other phases of the game has its own unique peculiarities. The most characteristic fact about the starting position is that the armies of both sides are still, so to speak, occupying rearguard posts. This suggests what the basic strategic task for both sides must be: to mobilize their forces as expediently and quickly as they can. In the process of mobilization the opposing armies will inevitably clash and begin a fight to seize favourable points.

Thus, the rationale of the fight which is joined in a chess game right from the start consists in developing your own forces to good positions as fast and effectively as possible, while trying your hardest to stop your opponent from doing the same.

It is not difficult to see that the most favourable points are located in the centre of the board – the central squares represent the most convenient stronghold for stationing the forces. The issue of the centre is all the more crucial in the opening because, in the starting position, this sector of the board is vacant – which presents both sides with an imperative to fight for it and conquer it. For this very reason the centre is the principal theatre of warlike actions in the opening phase.

Thus, combined with the fight for the centre, the mobilization of the pieces is the fundamental, unique law for playing any chess opening.

Let us examine the constituent parts of this law in more detail.

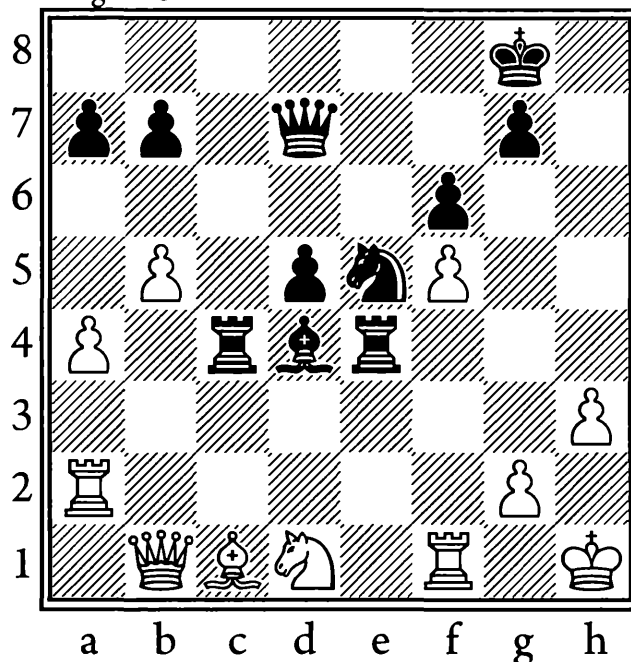
As we know, any piece placed in the centre (with the exception of the rook) is “hitting” more squares than it would elsewhere, which means that this is where it possesses its greatest fighting value. Furthermore it is from the centre that pieces can be transferred to either of the flanks in the smallest number of moves. These

two circumstances make the centre the most important place on the whole chessboard.

M. Stolberg - M. Botvinnik

Moscow 1940

Diagram 3



What stands out when you look at the diagram is the radical difference in the placing of the two sides' forces. Black has gained total control of a stronghold in the centre. Making a mighty striking force out of his pieces there, he dominates the entire board.

White's forces are scattered and have been driven into rear positions. He can no longer get them co-ordinated to resist his opponent's fearsome and constantly mounting pressure. The outcome of the struggle is a foregone conclusion.

The final moves were:

33.a5 ♔c5 34.b6 a6 35.♘b2 ♜c3 36.♙d2 ♜b3 37.♚c2 ♚b5 38.♞c1 ♙f8 39.♞d1 ♞e2 40.♞c1 ♞xh3†!! 41. gxf3 d4!

White surrendered.

In this game the principle of centralization comes across vividly and impressively. Even the mortal blow that is irresistibly threatened would come from the central square d5.

But Black did not succeed all at once in gaining such a colossal preponderance in the centre. It resulted from focusing attention on the centre from the very first moves, in contrast to his opponent who did not give the central terrain its due importance.

The game whose finale we have just examined started as follows:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0–0
5.♙d3 d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♘ge2 c5 8.0–0
♘c6 9.a3 cxd4 10.exd4 ♙d6

From here the bishop controls e5, while White's surveillance of this important point has been weakened by developing his knight on e2 rather than f3.

11.h3

Contributing nothing to the fight for the centre. A better move was 11.♙f4!, at once neutralizing the pressure from the black bishop.

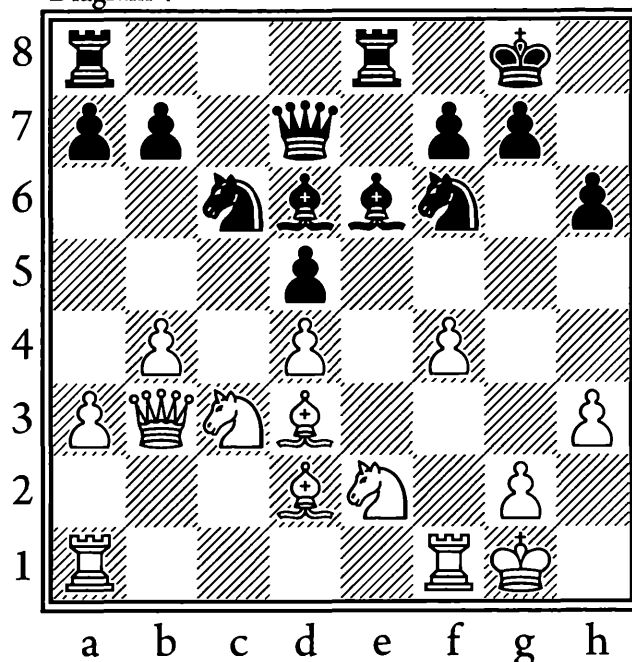
11...h6 12.b4 ♖e8 13.♙b3 ♙e6!

This move impedes the action of Black's own rook on the e-file. Is it necessary? Doesn't it reduce his pressure on the centre? It turns out that it does not. Furthermore this move has a deep idea behind it; Black is commencing a manoeuvre aimed at weakening the influence of White's pieces on the centre, and afterwards conquering it. At the same time he facilitates the further mobilization of his queenside forces.

14.♙d2 ♙d7 15.f4

Many players (especially young ones) will notice a danger to their own king before anything else. Stolberg probably wanted to shut off the bishop on d6 and prevent a possible sacrifice with 15...♙xh3. But now the e4-square is weakened even more, and Botvinnik gives a textbook example of how to exploit this kind of weakness.

Diagram 4



15...♙f5!

Obviously the more weak points your opponent has, the easier it is to break into his camp. With a central pawn position of this type, the centre squares adjacent to the pawns are usually the weak ones. For White this means e4 and c4, and for Black, e5 and c5.

The natural defenders of these weak points are the bishops of the corresponding colour. Botvinnik deprives his opponent of the defender in question, and gaping holes arise in the middle of White's position, on the squares e4 and c4. Black's manoeuvre is not fortuitous. It was prepared by his foregoing play which was oriented to seizing the central ground, and which proved all the more effective since White did not give due attention to securing his own central points.

16.♙c2 ♙e4

The immediate 16...♙xd3 was possible too, but Black has no objection to 17.♘xe4 dxe4. In that case he would obtain a strong passed e-pawn and an excellent post on d5 for a knight, while White would be left with a pawn weakness on d4.

17.b5 ♙xd3 18.♙xd3

Or 18.bxc6 ♙f5!. White is in a very bad way.

18...♞a5!

The knight at once heads towards the breach that has opened up. White could stop this and even win a pawn by continuing 19.♞xd5 ♞xd5 20.♙xa5, but after 20...♞e3! 21.♞c4 ♞e6! 22.f5 (or 22.♞ae1 ♞c8 23.♞a2 ♞xa3 etc.) 22...♞e4, Black's positional plus is unquestionable.

19.♞g3

To guard the e4-square.

19...♞c4!

Again Black's strong positional knight move involves a pawn sacrifice, but after 20.♞xd5 ♞xd5 21.♞xc4 ♞e3! 22.♙xe3 ♞xe3 he would be master of the situation.

20.♙c1 ♞ac8 21.♞a2 ♙f8 22.a4

White removes his a-pawn from attack and supports the pawn on b5, but at the same time the b4-square is weakened.

22...♙b4! 23.♞d1

The threat was 23...♙xc3 and 24...♞e3.

23...♞e4!

the centre and dominates the position.

There followed:

24.f5 ♞xg3 25.♞xg3 ♙d6 26.♞f3 ♙e7 27.♞g3 ♙f6 28.♙xh6 ♙xd4† 29.♞h1 f6 30.♙c1 ♞e4 31.♞d3 ♞e5 32.♞b1 ♞c4

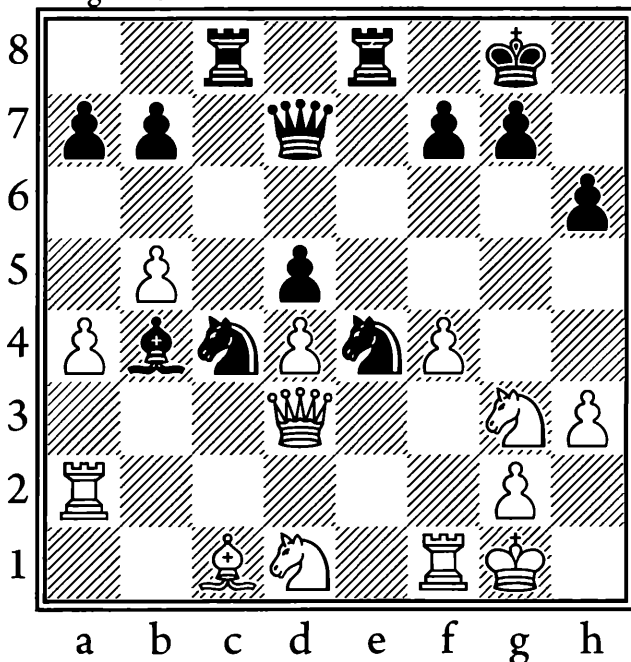
Thus reaching the position where we began our study of this example – which so brilliantly reveals the enormous role of the centre in a game of chess.

The centre is of great significance in all phases of the game, but especially in the opening. To underline this last fact, Peter Romanovsky in his day shrewdly noted that “the opening is a fight for the centre”.

Attitudes to the centre have changed as chess has evolved. At first the approach was extremely straightforward and superficial; it boiled down to stating that the player possessing the centre always had the advantage – when domination of the centre was understood in purely mechanical terms, by an arithmetical count of the pawns occupying it.

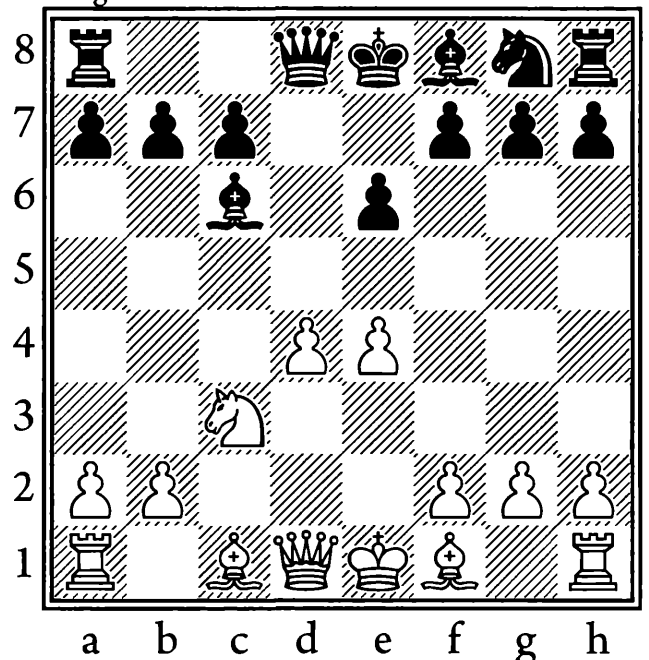
According to such views, in the following position White undoubtedly predominates in the centre, where he has two pawns to his opponent's one.

Diagram 5

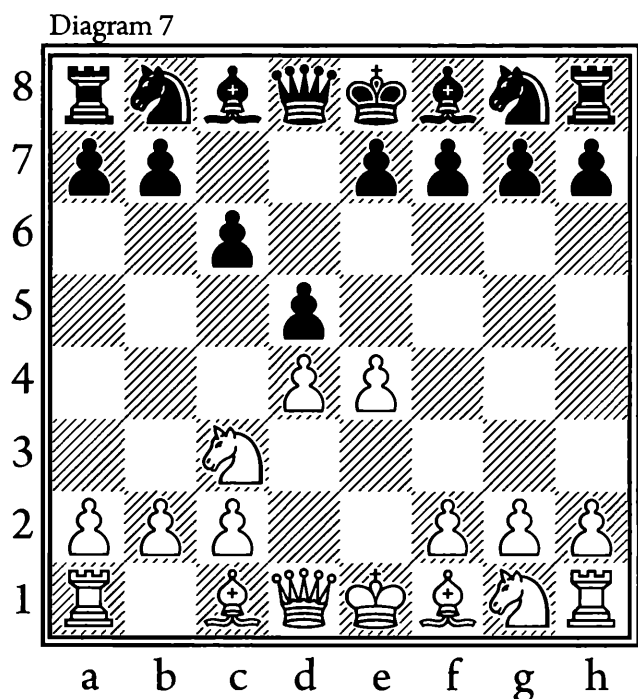


Black's exceptionally methodical play has borne fruit: he has seized complete control of

Diagram 6



In the next diagram, the exchange d5xe4 would have been regarded as surrender of the centre. A white knight will appear there, while in addition the disappearance of the d5-pawn allows White to bring his c-pawn to c4.



The further development of chess ideas has shown that such simple-mindedness in treating the problem of the centre is out of touch with reality. In developing new approaches to the centre, a major role was played by some distinguished players from Russia: Chigorin, Alekhine and Nimzowitsch.

Back in 1895, after the opening moves of the Queen's Gambit 1.d4 d5 2.c4, Chigorin employed the defence 2...♘c6, which was subsequently named after him. Rather than support his centre pawn with another one, Chigorin allowed the exchange of White's pawn on c4 for his own on d5. According to his orthodox chess contemporaries he was committing an obvious "sin" in allowing White two central pawns ("d" and "e") facing a single black pawn on the e-file.

For example Grandmaster Tarrasch, the leader of the German school of chess at the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th, declared that with this defence Chigorin was

"contradicting" theory, which *demand*s that in the Queen's Gambit the c-pawn should be moved.

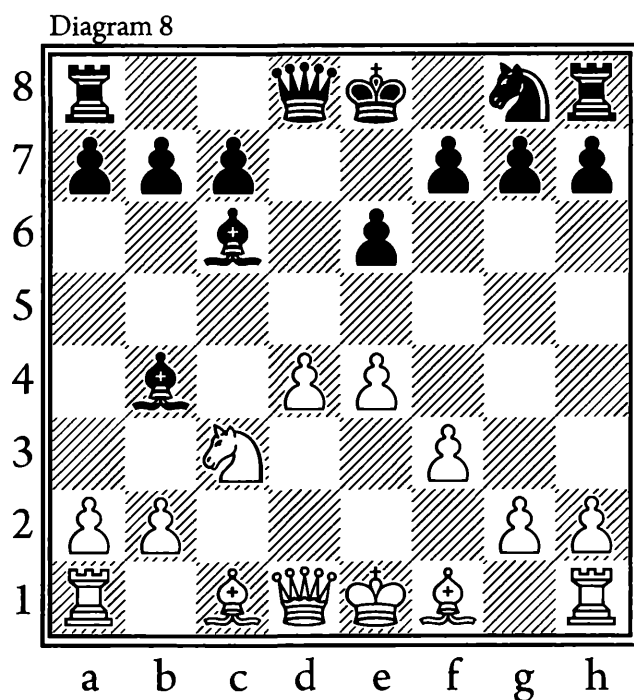
Chigorin nevertheless used his "incorrect" opening to score wins against the strongest players of that time – Steinitz, Lasker, Pillsbury and others.

H. Pillsbury – M. Chigorin

St Petersburg 1895

In this game the celebrated Russian player brilliantly demonstrates that the concept of a "strong pawn centre" is in itself entirely relative.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♙g4 4.cxd5 ♙xf3
5.dxc6 ♙xc6 6.♘c3 e6 7.e4 ♙b4 8.f3



Pillsbury had been aiming for this position, on the assumption that possessing a pawn centre would ensure him of an advantage. With his next moves, however, Chigorin reduces the significance of the white centre.

8...f5! 9.e5

The continuation 9.exf5 exf5 10.♙c4 ♖h4† 11.g3 ♖e7† does not look any better: all that remains of White's centre is an isolated d-pawn

which needs protecting.

9...♖e7 10.a3 ♕a5 11.♕c4 ♕d5!

Chigorin endeavours to exchange the light-squared bishops, so as to organize a blockade in the centre.

12.♖a4† c6 13.♕d3

If 13.♕xd5 ♖xd5 14.♕d2, then 14...b5! 15.♖c2 ♖h4† and 16...♖xd4 is bad for White.

13...♖b6!

Threatening to win the white queen with 14...♕b3, or to take on d4 if the queen retreats.

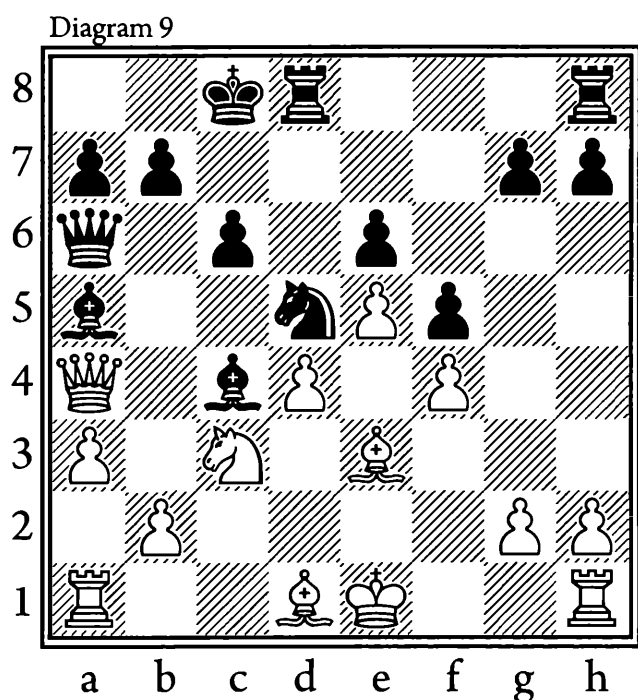
14.♕c2 ♖a6!

Seizing the light squares for good.

15.♕d1

To save the queen from b7-b5.

15...♕c4 16.f4 0–0–0 17.♕e3 ♖d5



The weakening of the white centre, followed by its blockade, has been carried out in instructive fashion. White is completely helpless.

Play continued:

18.♕d2 ♖b6 19.♖c2 ♖xd4 20.♖c1 ♕d3

21.♖b3 ♖c4 22.♖f2 ♖xd2

Black is already a piece up.

By giving his opponent the opportunity to set up a pawn centre, Chigorin was supposedly “breaking the rules”, but in this way he nonetheless achieved superb results.

To the public this seemed incomprehensible; it demanded an explanation. One such explanation came from Tarrasch, whom we mentioned before: “...the defence 1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♖c6, invented by the great Russian master Chigorin, *is in contradiction to theory* ... but after a close examination I may say that this defence is better than its reputation – and if it should again be played by such a master as Chigorin, it may possibly prove its worth.”

Thus in the past the naive conviction arose that the new defence was bad, but that the moves of the genius Chigorin “covered up” its defects. This kind of opinion resulted because Chigorin’s creative ideas were well ahead of their time, and thus incomprehensible even to many masters who were his contemporaries.

Let’s look at one of the variations of this defence:

1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♖c6 3.♖c3 ♖f6

As before, Black declines to defend his centre with a pawn.

4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.e4

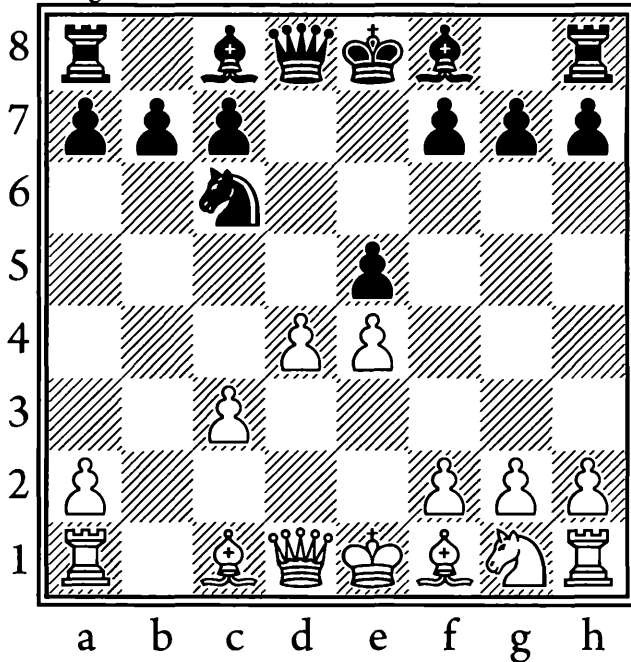
White has set up a massive pawn centre. According to the old notions Black ought to be very badly off, but after:

5...♖xc3 6.bxc3 e5!

The position of the knight on c6 allows him to attack White’s centre successfully.

(see diagram next page)

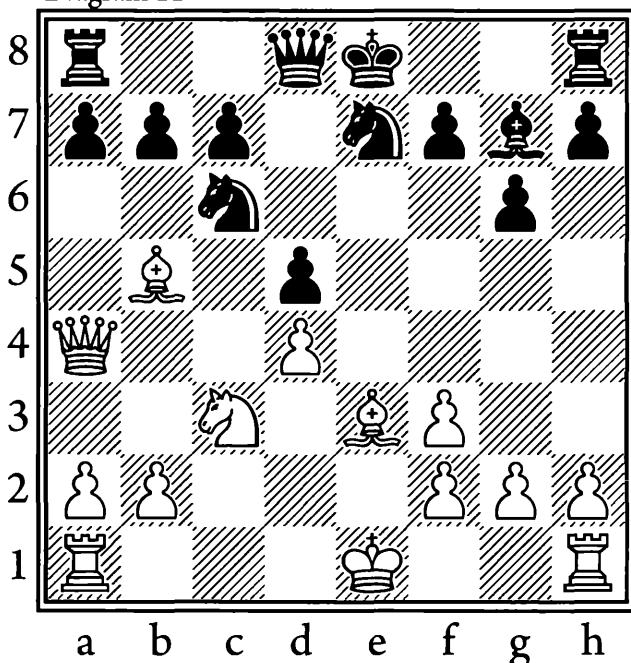
Diagram 10



After **7.d5 Bb8!** White has two pawns to one in the centre, but his own pawns are deprived of mobility and blockaded on the dark squares. The knight on b8 will be able to station itself comfortably on c5.

Here is how Grandmaster David Bronstein handles the Chigorin Defence today. After **1.d4 d5 2.Bf3 Bc6 3.c4 g4 4.Qa4 Bxf3 5.exf3 e6 6.Nc3**, in a game against Fuster (Moscow – Budapest match 1949) he continued: **6...Ng7! 7.Be3 g6! 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Bb5 Bg7**

Diagram 11



Developing Chigorin's idea of piece pressure against the centre, Bronstein has enriched it with a new, original plan: he puts pressure on the central d4-point not only with the knight on c6 but also with the bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal.

In this connection I would like to quote the following apt statement by Bronstein himself: "We should recall that there were also many other openings which were formidable weapons in Chigorin's hands, only to be consigned to the 'incorrect' category after his death.

Why did that happen?

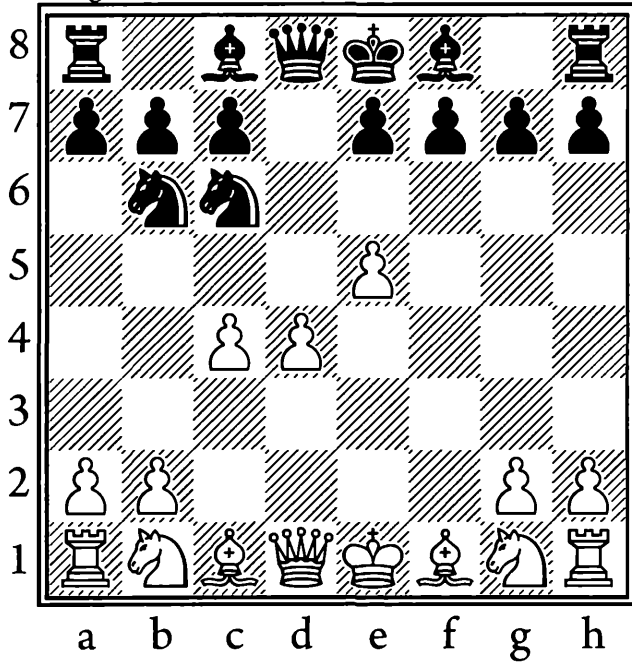
It happened because *Chigorin's opening variations were indissolubly linked to the subsequent middlegame struggle*, and he managed to introduce something new and valuable in each of his games. His contemporaries did not understand this; they tried to play Chigorin's openings in a routine manner, constantly sticking to the same schemes. It is only with the help of fruitful work by Soviet masters that many of Mikhail Chigorin's ideas have been resurrected."

Chigorin was the first to reject a mechanical understanding of the problem of the centre, replacing it with a concept of putting pressure on the centre with pawns and pieces. In the first decades of the 20th century, the new approach to the centre was taken further in the games and theoretical investigations of Alekhine, Nimzowitsch, Réti, Grünfeld and others.

Let us turn to Alekhine's Defence, of which Nimzowitsch wrote: "The most brilliant post-revolutionary feat is Alekhine's 1...Bf6. ... Alekhine's move is stunning, you cannot help calling it brilliant."

Indeed, in answer to **1.e4** Black offers a bold challenge to the white pawns: **1...Bf6 2.e5 Bd5 3.c4 Bb6 4.d4 d6! 5.f4 dxe5 6.fxe5 Bc6**

Diagram 12



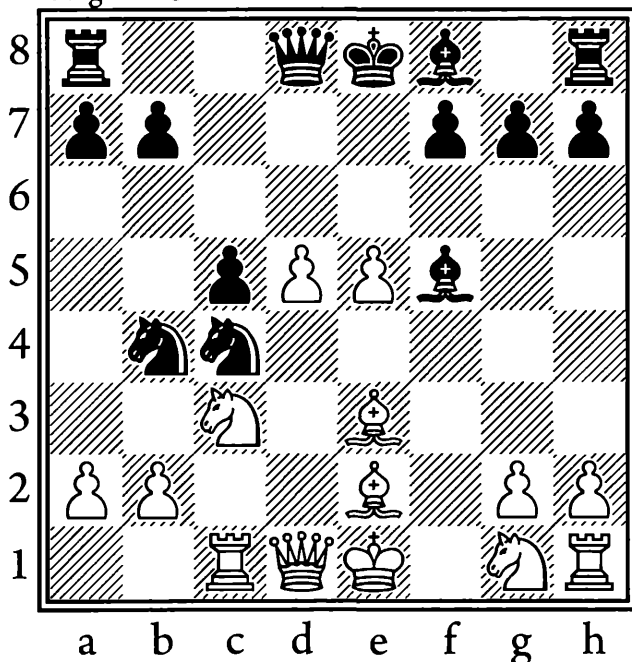
After the first four moves White obtains three connected pawns in the centre. According to the old concepts this would seem an immense achievement.

Yet Alekhine and others after him demonstrated that this pawn avalanche is fairly harmless. White's centre is vulnerable and faces a swift counter-attack.

In this connection the following line is instructive:

7.♘e3 ♘f5 8.♗c3 e6 9.♘e2 ♗b4 10.♖c1 c5 11. d5 Black provokes White into seizing the centre, as he has prepared a shattering blow: **11...exd5 12.cxd5 ♗c4!**

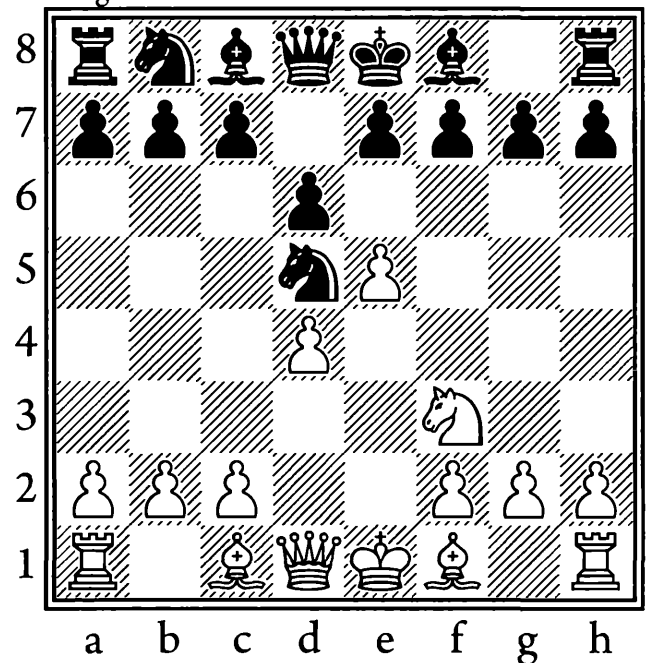
Diagram 13



An interesting position! Now 13.♘xc4 would be met by 13...♕h4†, while on 13.♘f4 Black has 13...♗xb2. By seizing the centre without preparation, White has landed in a difficult situation (Georgadze – Kopylov, Georgia-Leningrad match 1948).

It is interesting that today White's fight for an advantage against Alekhine's Defence is mostly conducted *not* by this immediate occupation of the centre with pawns, but by continuing more flexibly with 1.e4 ♗f6 2.e5 ♗d5 3.d4 d6 4.♗f3.

Diagram 14

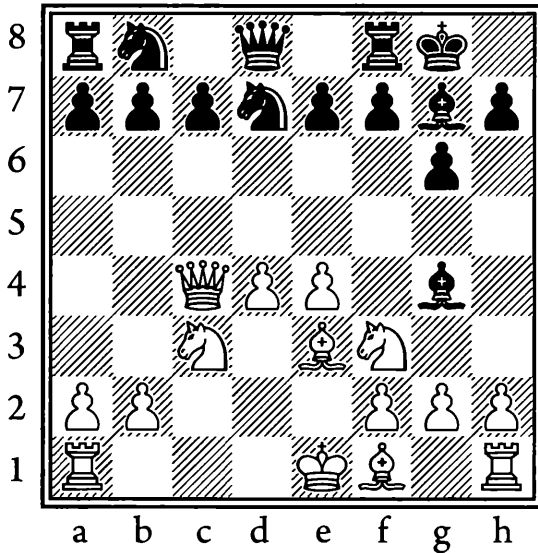


In just the same way as in the examples we have looked at, the appearance of many other original opening systems was grounded in the new conception of the centre.

The next two diagrams illustrate positions from the Grünfeld Defence.

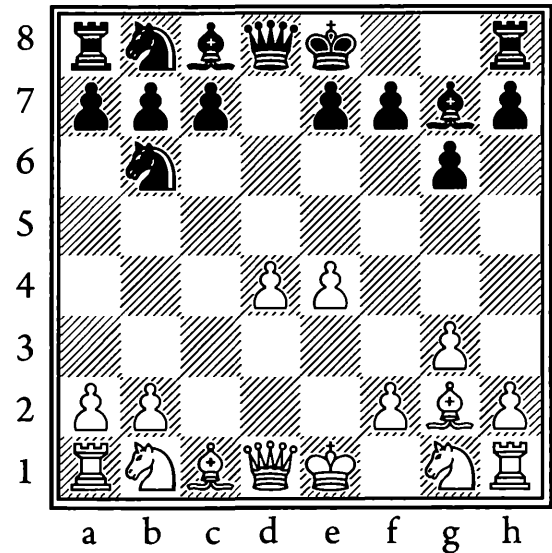
(See diagrams next page)

Diagram 15



Position after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♙g7
5.♙b3 dxc4 6.♙xc4 0-0 7.e4 ♙g4 8.♙e3 ♘fd7

Diagram 16



Position after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♙g7 4.♙g2 d5
5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4 ♘b6

Black deliberately allows White to form a mighty pawn centre. In return he deploys his own forces flexibly with a view to mounting a systematic attack on that centre, weakening it, and destroying it if he can; alternatively, after tying a major part of White's forces to the defence of the centre, he may gain an advantage on the flank.

Let us turn to Réti's Opening.

R. Réti – F. Yates

New York 1924

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙d6
5.b3 0-0 6.0-0 ♙e8 7.♙b2 ♘bd7 8.d3 c6
9.♘bd2 e5 10.cxd5 cxd5

Diagram 17

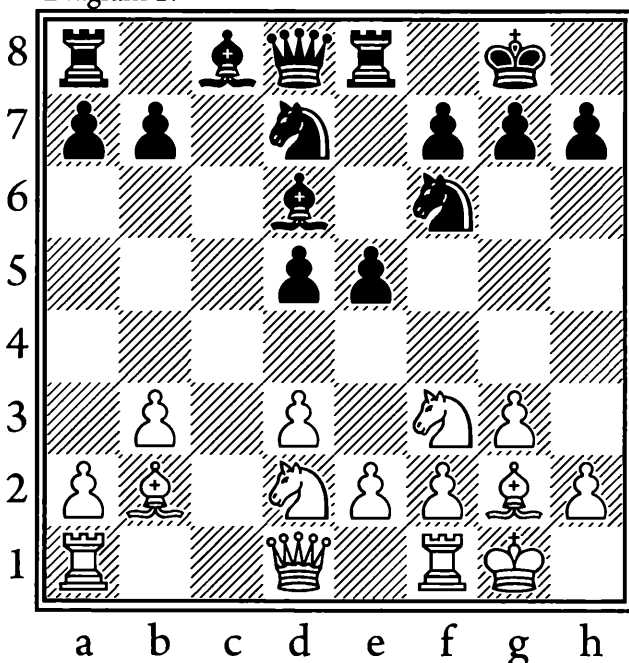
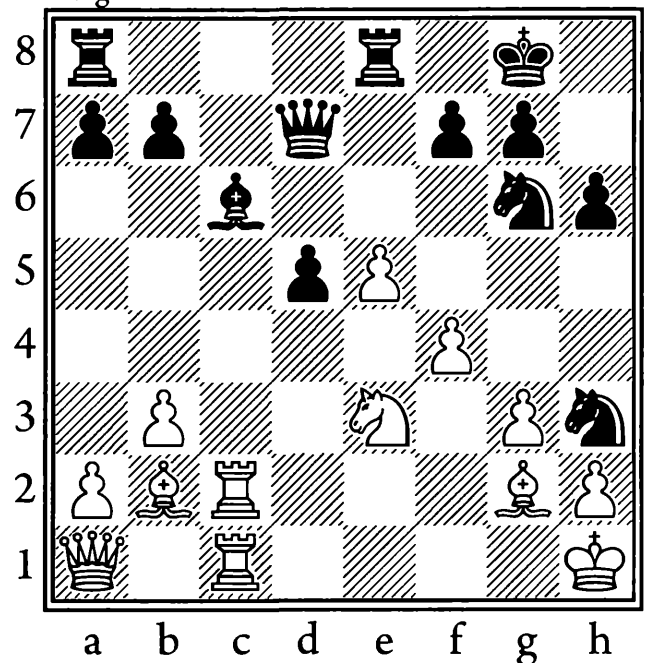


Diagram 18



Thus White has given Black the opportunity to occupy the centre. Play continued:

11.♙c1 ♘f8 12.♙c2 ♙d7 13.♙a1 ♘g6
14.♙fc1 ♙c6 15.♘f1 ♙d7 16.♘e3 h6
17.d4!

As we see, the attack against Black's centre is in full swing. There followed:

17...e4 18.♘e5 ♙xe5 19.dxe5 ♘h7 20.f4
exf3 21.exf3 ♘g5 22.f4 ♘h3† 23.♙h1

Black's centre has been undermined and destroyed.

Some players may be forming the opinion that an early occupation of the centre with pawns is,

in general terms, undesirable. Such a conclusion would be over-hasty and false, since there are many cases where pawns occupying the centre do bring an advantage. Everything depends on the concrete circumstances. I only wish to emphasize that a pawn centre should not automatically be thought to have decisive significance.

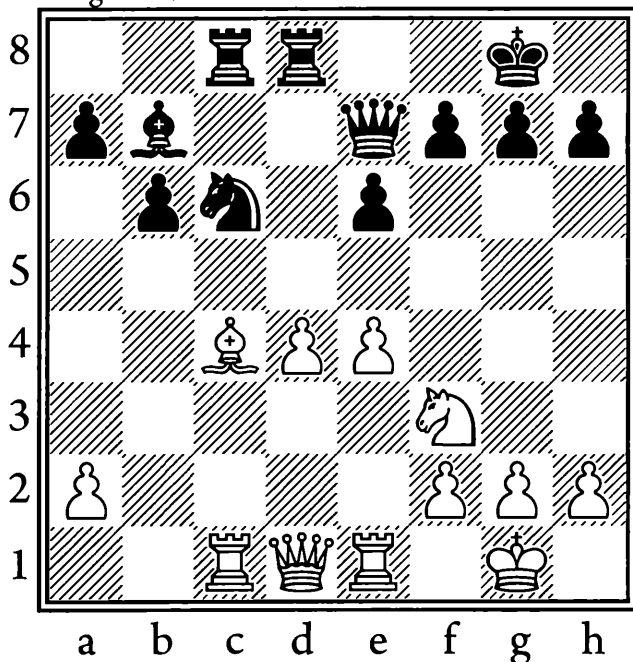
Rejecting Tarrasch's false, mechanical understanding of the problem of the centre, Nimzowitsch wrote in his book *My System*:

"Certainly, pawns, as being the most stable, are best suited to building a centre; nevertheless centrally posted pieces can perfectly well take their place. And, too, pressure exerted on the enemy centre by the long range action of rooks or bishops directed on it can well be of corresponding importance."

What is the decisive argument in each particular instance of pawns occupying the centre? "To occupy, or not to occupy?"

To deal with this important question properly, we need to understand that occupation of the centre is not an end in itself but is important to the extent that it enables us to take the initiative and exert pressure on the opponent's position. It quite often happens that a player sets up his centre but then finds it to be nothing but a burden, as it serves as a convenient target for the opponent's counter-attack.

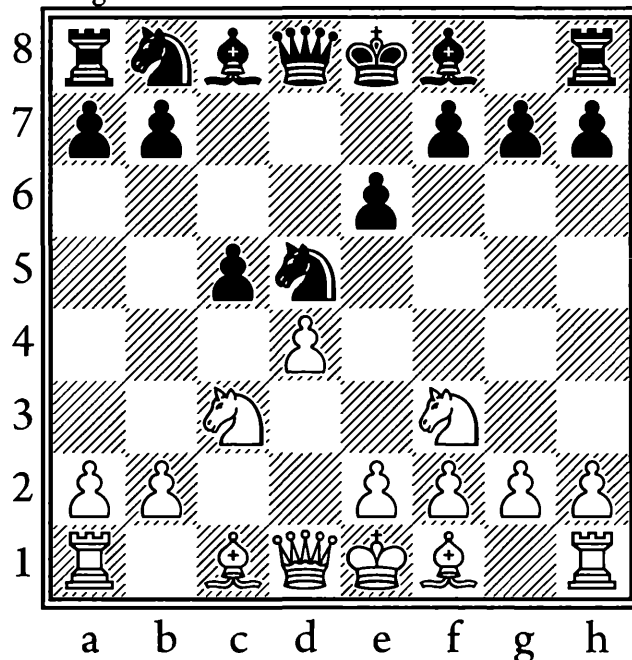
Diagram 19



In the diagram position White's pawn centre is more of a weakness than a strength, as it constantly needs to be looked after. He is unable to use it to organize an attack on his opponent's position. Black already threatens ♖e7-f6. His game is obviously promising: he can combine an attack against the centre with active play on the queenside.

In the popular Queen's Gambit variation arising from 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 c5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5, White has two ways of playing: he can either occupy the centre with a second pawn by 6.e4, or else simply bolster his central d-pawn with 6.e3.

Diagram 20



What, then, is best for White?

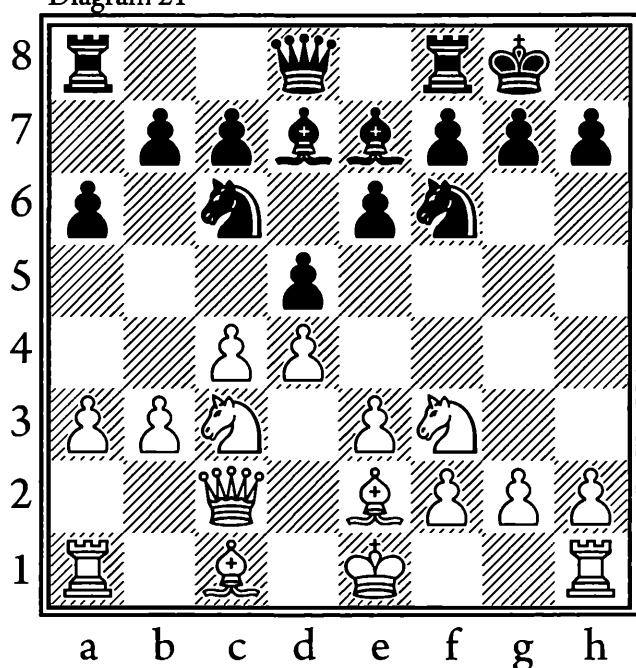
In contemporary tournament practice the majority of players, from Botvinnik, Smyslov, Bronstein and Kotov down, will choose the second method – which outwardly seems the more modest. This choice may be explained by the fact that in the 6.e4 line Black succeeds fairly simply in neutralizing the white pawn centre and working up an initiative on the queenside. Even though White's position in the centre after 6.e3 is a more modest one, he avoids simplifications and has more possibilities at his disposal than after 6.e4.

Thus when the complex question arises as to whether you should occupy the whole centre with pawns or not, the right answer depends on what role your centre will play in the coming struggle. It is this that decides whether the strength of the centre will be real or illusory. When giving your opponent the opportunity to occupy the centre with *his* pawns (or with pawns and pieces), you need to form a wholly realistic and concrete picture of how that centre can be energetically attacked or besieged.

E. Zagoriansky – Y. Estrin

Moscow 1950

Diagram 21



With **10...dxc4 11.bxc4 Qa5** Black conceded a central preponderance to his opponent, probably deciding to compensate himself by an immediate attack on the white centre with c7-c5.

Yet even this momentary weakening of Black's central position allows White to gain a decisive advantage by **12.e4!** (in the game he played 12.0–0). If **12...c5** then **13.e5**, when **13...Qe8** is met by **14.d5!**. After **13.e5**, the reply **13...cxd4 14.exf6 Qxf6 15.Qe4 d3 16.Qxf6† Qxf6** is ingenious, but inadequate

in view of **17.Qxd3 Qxa1 18.Qxh7† Qh8 19.0–0!**, winning for White.

So in that game Black gave his opponent the opportunity to set up a strong and dangerous pawn centre when there was no real counter-attack in return for it. For this he could have paid dearly.

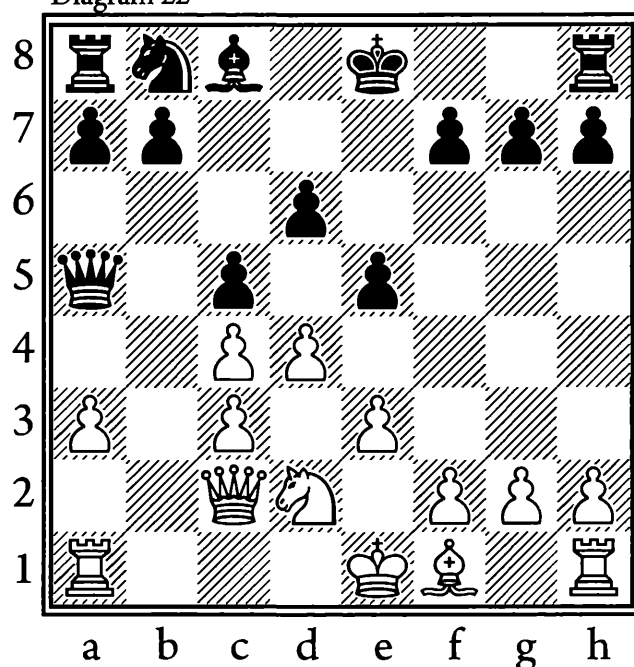
Among contemporary players it is the World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik who has demonstrated exceptional mastery of the opening struggle for the strongpoints in the centre. In a whole series of games, subtly exploiting his opponents' errors, he has achieved total domination of the centre and essentially predetermined the outcome in his own favour before the opening was even over. I shall now give a few examples.

M. Botvinnik – I. Kan

Leningrad 1939

1.d4 Qf6 2.c4 e6 3.Qc3 Qb4 4.Qf3 c5 5.a3 Qxc3† 6.bxc3 Qa5 7.Qd2 Qe4 8.Qc2 Qxd2 9.Qxd2 d6 10.e3 e5

Diagram 22



In his note to Black's last move, Botvinnik wrote: "This is the root cause of all Black's later

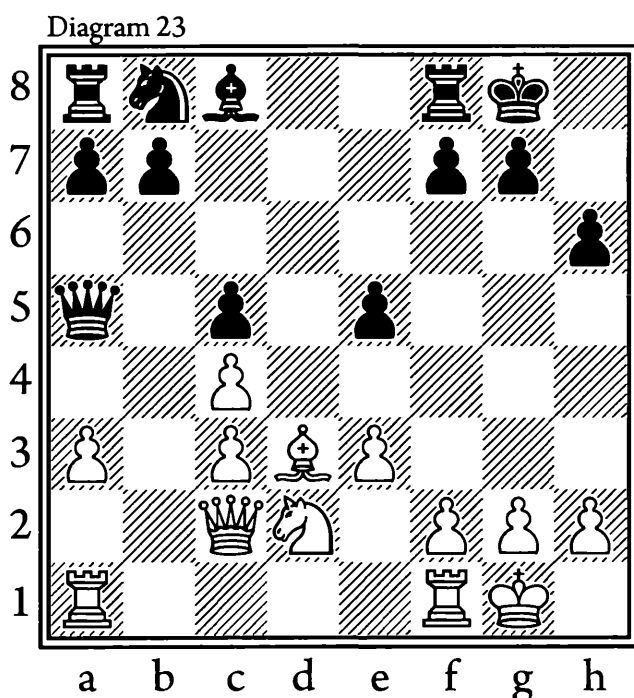
troubles! He heedlessly weakens the point d5 which can serve as a good base for the white pieces. In addition he wastes a tempo that is essential for his development. The right move was 10...♘c6.”

11. dxe5! dxe5

“A characteristic position. At first sight White has the worse pawn formation, so Black should have nothing to fear. This would be true if we could take all the pieces off. But there are still plenty of them on the board, and therefore the weakness of the point d5 in Black’s camp counts for more than the doubling of the c-pawns. Indeed the doubled c-pawns are even an asset to White; the point is that in order to take firm possession of d5 he needs to advance his e-pawn to e4, and then the doubled pawn on c3 will safely guard the d4-square against invasion by the black pieces.”

12. ♕d3 h6 13. 0–0 0–0

So White has achieved a clear preponderance in the centre, where he is free to operate on the squares e4 and d5 which he controls.



But how, specifically, is he to exploit this positional plus? One of the most obvious plans would be to bring his knight to the central

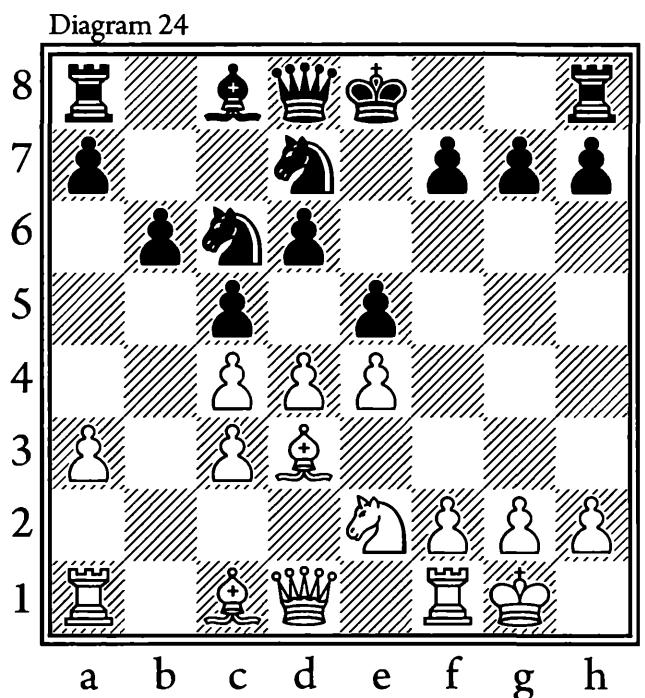
d5-point. However, Botvinnik indicates that after 14.e4 ♘c6 15.♖fd1 ♔e6 16.♘f1 ♜ad8 17.♘e3 ♘e7 White achieves nothing to speak of, since Black meets 18.♘d5 with 18...♔xd5 and then transfers his knight from e7 to the blockading square d6.

From this we should not jump to the conclusion that with such a pawn structure the whole idea of bringing the knight to d5 is futile. We are only speaking of this specific position from the game Botvinnik – Kan. In a slightly different setting, the knight manoeuvre to d5 may prove very strong, as the following example suffices to show.

E. Geller – I. Lipnitsky

Moscow 1951

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♔b4 4.a3 ♔xc3†
5.bxc3 c5 6.e3 ♘c6 7.♔d3 b6 8.e4 d6
9.♘e2 e5 10.0–0 ♘d7



The variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence that Black has chosen was long considered satisfactory. True, his kingside is decidedly vulnerable, especially in view of a possible f2-f4, but he has done everything he can to fortify e5 and

thus keep White's bishop on d3 confined. Also Black may castle on the queenside, where it is very difficult for White to mount an attack.

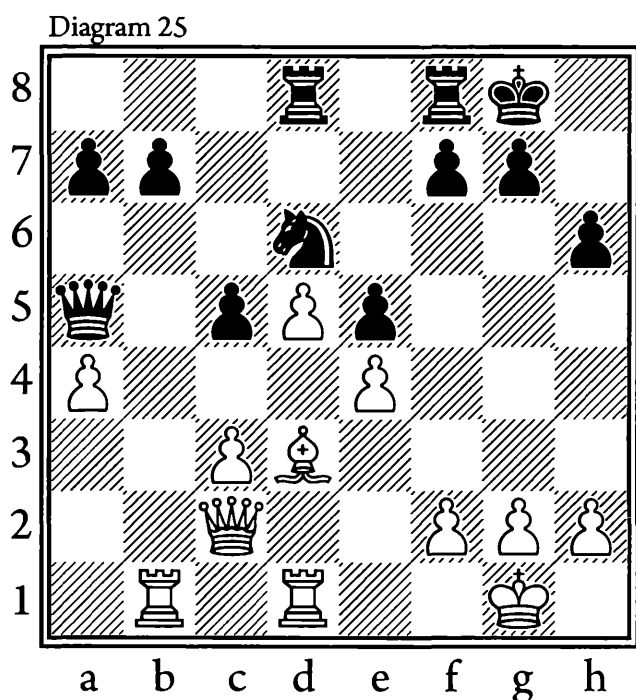
However, in the centre of Black's position d5 is extremely weak. Utilizing this fact, Geller carried out an interesting plan and cast doubt on this variation of the defence. He played:

11. ♖g3 g6

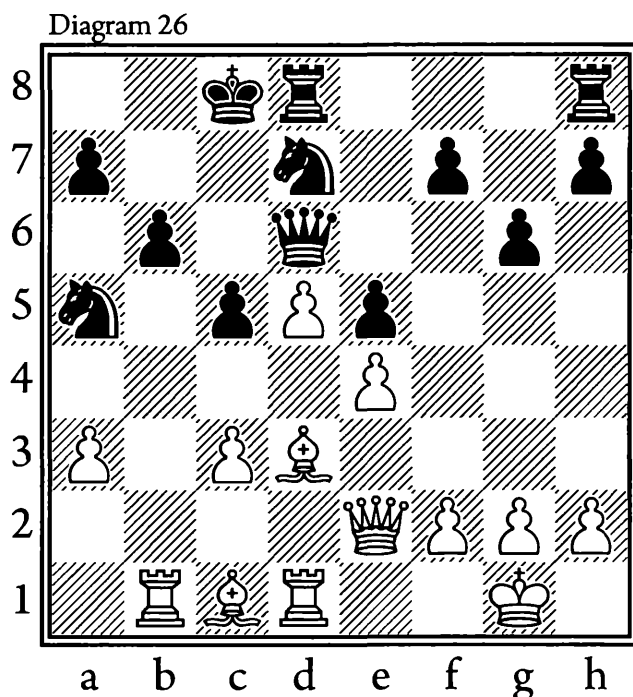
Otherwise 12. ♖f5.

12. dxe5 dxe5 13. ♔e2 ♔e7 14. ♖d1 ♗b7 15. ♖f1 0-0-0 16. ♖e3 ♖a5 17. ♖d5 ♔d6 18. ♖b1 ♗xd5 19. cxd5

Why would the knight's tour to d5 have been pointless in Botvinnik – Kan despite being highly dangerous here? To understand this better, let us compare two positions.



This diagram is from the variation given by Botvinnik. There are no weak points in Black's position. His knight is occupying an ideal post on d6. It is hard for White to create any pressure.



In this diagram from the Geller – Lipnitsky game, Black's position *does* have many weaknesses. White threatens to evict the knight from a5 and advance his a-pawn to open lines on the queenside. The light squares in Black's camp are palpably weak. Essentially the position is already won for White.

After **19... ♖b8 20. a4 ♔c7 21. ♗d2 ♖b7 22. ♖b2 ♔e7 23. ♖db1 ♖d6** (or **23... ♖d6 24. a5!**) **24. ♗e3** (threatening **25. ♖b5** and **26. a5**, when White will meet **26... ♖xa5** with **27. ♗xc5!**) **24... a5 25. ♗a6! ♖d7** (White threatened to take on b7 and then c5) **26. ♖b5**, Black's position is indefensible. White's attack was made possible by bringing his knight to d5.

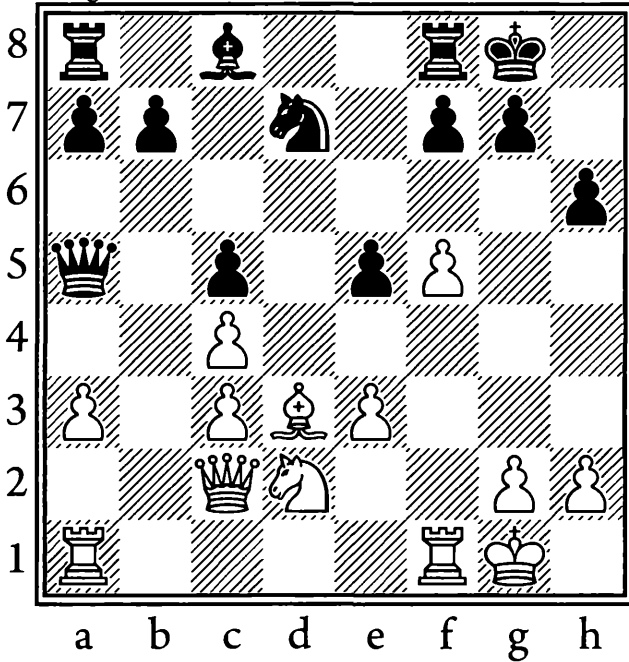
But let's return to the game Botvinnik – Kan, to see how White exploited his advantage in the centre.

14. f4 ♖d7

"After **14... exf4 15. exf4** the game would open up (e-file!), and White with his better development would be able to take advantage of this sooner than his opponent." (Botvinnik)

15. f5!

Diagram 27



15...♘f6

“This may be the decisive mistake already! Black’s move is aimed at stopping the white f-pawn from advancing further. The right continuation, however, was 15...f6, although of course White’s position should still be preferred – since the central squares under his control, e4 and d5, greatly facilitate the manoeuvres of his pieces. Black’s rejection of 15...f6 means that one of his pieces will constantly have to be on guard on the f6-square. But the main trouble is that White now has the chance to exchange knights, after which his bishop in the centre will feel completely in charge.” (Botvinnik)

16.♘e4! ♔d8 17.♘xf6†

But not 17.♘xc5 on account of 17...♔b6!.

17...♔xf6 18.♔e4 ♔b8 19.♔ad1 b6 20. h3 ♔a6 21.♔d5 b5

Black strives to create some sort of counterplay before White strengthens his position even further.

22.cxb5 ♔xb5

Botvinnik notes that Black could only have obtained counterplay by continuing 22...♔xb5

23.c4 ♔c6! 24.♔e4 ♔xd5 25.♔xd5. He would be sacrificing a pawn, but would acquire the open b-file.

23.c4 ♔b6 24.♔b1! ♔d8

Exchanging on b1 would concede the b-file to White, but even after the relatively best move – 24...♔fb8 – White could develop his initiative by 25.♔xb6 ♔xb6 (25...♔xb6 is worse: 26.f6! threatening ♔g6) 26.♔a4 ♔e7 27.f6 gxf6 28.♔c2 with a powerful attack.

25.♔xb6 axb6 26.e4

Black was threatening 26...♔xd5.

26...♔c8 27.♔a4

Penetrating on the queenside.

27...♔d7 28.♔a7 ♔e8 29.♔b1 ♔d6 30.a4

Black could answer 30.♔b8 with 30...♔f8, but now he is powerless to avert the loss of a pawn.

30...♔h7 31.a5 bxa5 32.♔xa5 ♔a6 33.♔xc5

Black resigned eight moves later:

33...♔a2 34.♔e3 ♔a6 35.♔b8 ♔a4 36.♔h2 ♔a3 37.♔c5 ♔a2 38.♔a8 ♔xa8 39.♔xa8 ♔xa8 40.♔xe5 ♔c6 41.♔c7 1–0

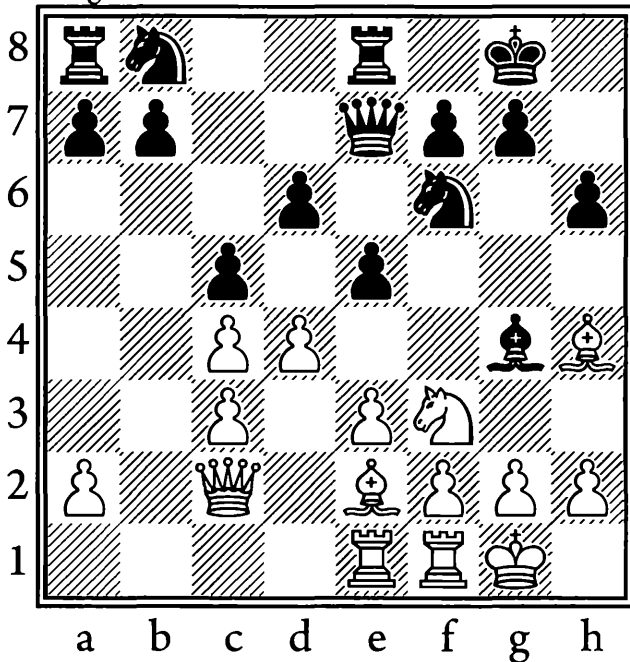
By now, the next example is easy to understand.

M. Botvinnik – V. Chekhover

Leningrad 1938

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♔b4 4.♘f3 0–0 5.♔g5 d6 6.e3 ♔e7 7.♔e2 e5 8.♔c2 ♔e8 9.0–0 ♔xc3 10.bxc3 h6 11.♔h4 c5 12.♔ae1 ♔g4

Diagram 28



13. ♖xf6

White does not cling to his bishop pair but eliminates the knight on f6 so as to weaken Black's defence of the central squares e4 and d5.

13... ♙xf6 14. ♙e4 ♖xf3

Black falls in with White's plans. Botvinnik indicates that 14... ♖f5 15. ♙xb7 ♜d7 would have been better, giving up a pawn to spoil the co-operation between White's pieces.

15. ♖xf3 ♜c6 16. dxc5 dxc5 17. ♖d1 ♖ad8 18. ♖d5

It turns out that the rook is now just as well placed on d5 as a minor piece would be.

18... b6

Or 18... ♖xd5 19. cxd5! ♜e7 20. d6! ♙xd6 21. ♙xb7, and Black is in trouble.

19. ♖fd1 ♜a5 20. h3 ♖xd5 21. ♖xd5 ♙e7

Not 21... ♖d8 because of 22. ♖xe5.

22. ♖g4!

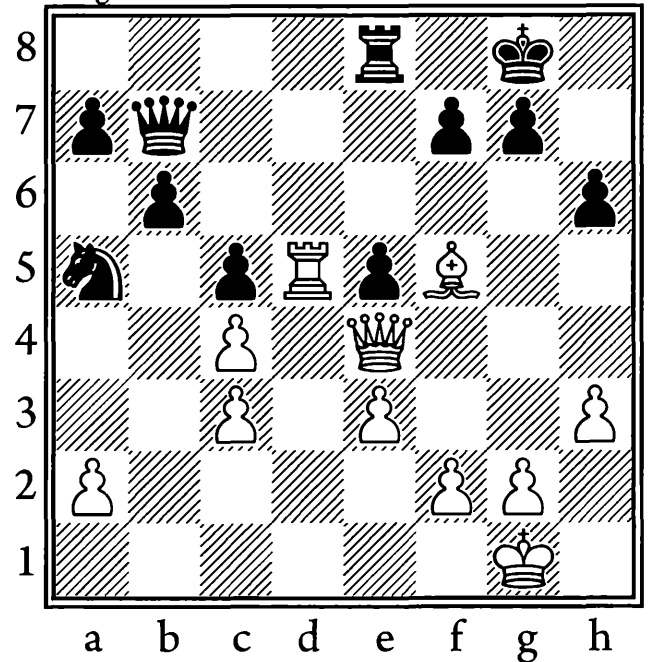
Now the rook cannot be stopped from penetrating to the 7th rank, for in answer to:

22... ♙b7

Botvinnik defended his queen with:

23. ♖f5!!

Diagram 29



White's centralized pieces dominate the entire position. The black forces, with no co-ordination of their actions, are helpless to confront them.

The game continued:

23... ♙b8 24. ♖d7 ♖d8 25. ♙xe5! ♜xc4 26. ♙xb8 ♖xb8 27. ♖e4!

The power of centralization is so great that for the sake of it White even forgoes the immediate win of a pawn by 27. ♖xa7.

27... ♜a3 28. ♖d5! ♖f8 29. e4 a5 30. c4 b5 31. cxb5 ♜xb5 32. e5 a4 33. f4! ♜d4 34. ♜f2 g5 35. g3 gxf4 36. gxf4 ♜e6 37. ♜e3

Even in the endgame White's pieces are all drawn towards the centre. There is no stopping the decisive breakthrough.

37... c4 38. f5 ♜c5 39. ♖c7 ♜d3 40. e6! fxe6 41. fxe6

Black resigned.

In the foregoing examples White demonstrated with disarming simplicity how to exploit weak

squares in the centre. His conquest of the centre in the next game is different in character.

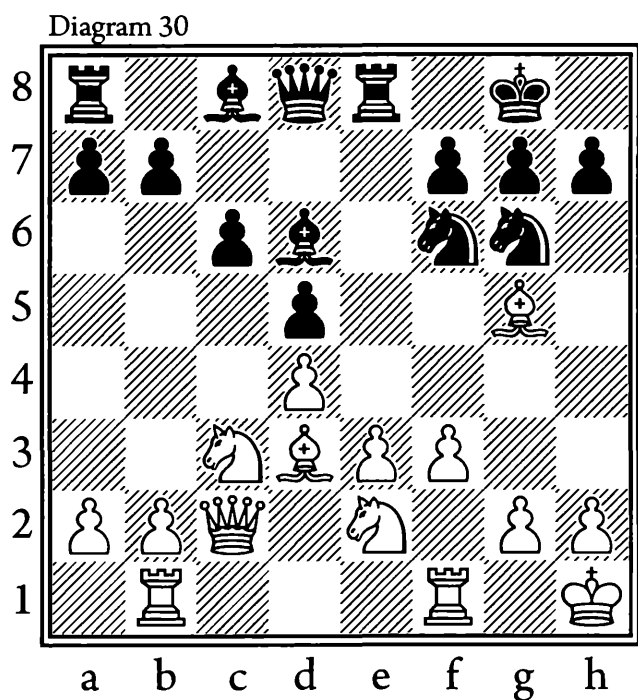
M. Botvinnik – P. Keres

Moscow 1952

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 exd5
5.♙g5 ♙e7 6.e3 0-0 7.♙d3 ♘bd7 8.♚c2
♞e8 9.♘ge2 ♘f8 10.0-0 c6 11.♞ab1 ♙d6
12.♙h1 ♘g6

Here there are no weak points in the centre for pieces to occupy. But White carries out a different plan: he seizes the centre with pawns.

13.f3!



13...♙e7 (Or 13...h6 14.♙xf6 ♚xf6 15.e4)
14.♞be1 ♘d7 15.♙xe7 ♞xe7 16.♘g3

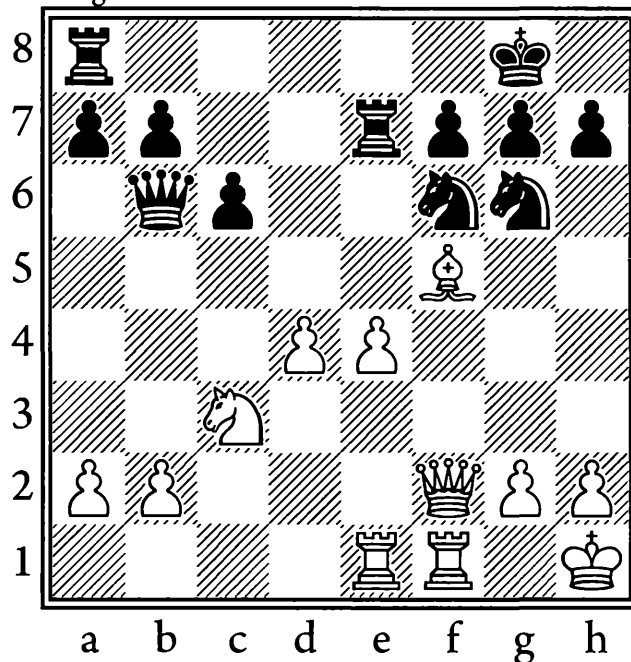
White does not hurry; he first improves the placing of his pieces.

16...♘f6 17.♚f2

Botvinnik brings his queen across to the king-side and fortifies the pawn on d4.

17...♙e6 18.♘f5 ♙xf5 19.♙xf5 ♚b6
20.e4 dxe4 21.fxe4

Diagram 31



The result of the manoeuvre initiated by White's 13th move is obvious: he has set up a mobile pawn centre. Botvinnik reckoned that Black's attack against this centre would prove inadequate.

21...♞d8 22.e5

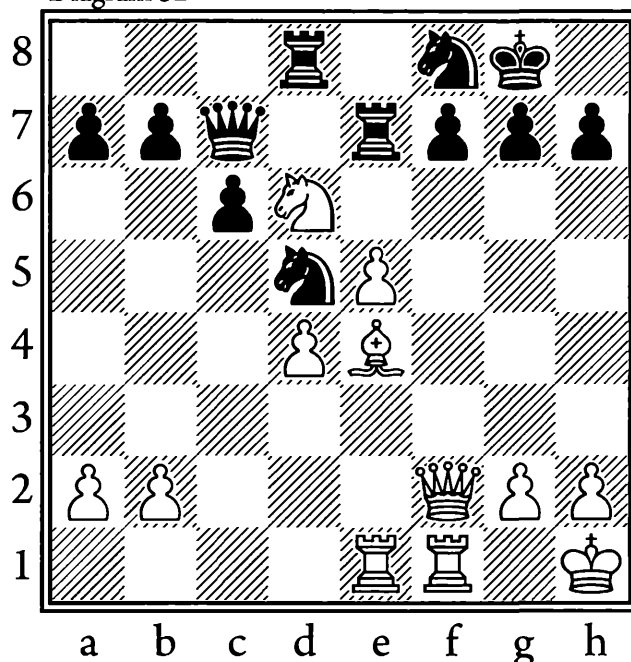
The strength of such a pawn centre lies in its mobility. By pushing his e-pawn White gains the e4-square for his knight, ensuring its future penetration to d6.

22...♘d5 23.♘e4! ♘f8 24.♘d6 ♚c7

White was already threatening 25.♘xf7!.

25.♙e4!

Diagram 32



All the advantages that come from possessing the centre are present here: while Black has extreme difficulty creating any sort of counter-play, White can calmly prepare the final attack on the king.

25...♖e6 26.♔h4 g6

Or 26...h6 27.♖f5 ♜ed7 28.♖xh6†! gxf6 29.♔xh6, and Black is lost.

27.♕xd5

White is winning. The concluding moves were:

27...cxd5 28.♜c1 ♔d7 29.♜c3 ♜f8 30.♖f5 ♜fe8 31.♖h6† ♕f8 32.♔f6 ♖g7 33.♜cf3 ♜c8 34.♖xf7 ♜e6 35.♔g5 ♖f5 36.♖h6 ♔g7 37.g4 1–0

In this game we can distinguish the following principal stages:

- (1) White's mobilization of his forces in the opening is deliberately aimed at gaining control of the centre.
- (2) He seizes the centre with his pawns.
- (3) He conquers a central stronghold with his pieces, and drives his opponent's forces back.
- (4) He utilizes his powerful pawn-and-piece centre to mount the concluding attack on the king.

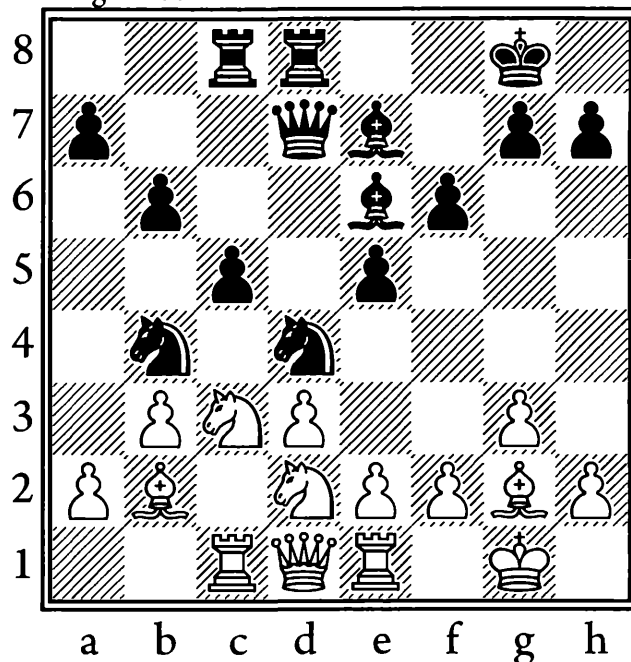
In some other games by Botvinnik we repeatedly encounter the typical central build-up of pawns and pieces which occurs in the following example.

V. Kirillov – M. Botvinnik

Moscow 1931

(See next diagram)

Diagram 33



The diagram position arose after Black's 21st move. In his book *Selected Games*, Botvinnik writes: "Black has achieved the ideal formation for his pieces and pawns. His knights are occupying unassailable posts, since the moves a2-a3 and e2-e3 would only weaken White's position fatally."

Such an ideally centralized position did not come about by chance; Black was striving towards it from the very first moves. The game began:

1.c4 c5 2.♖c3 ♖f6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.♕g2 ♖c7

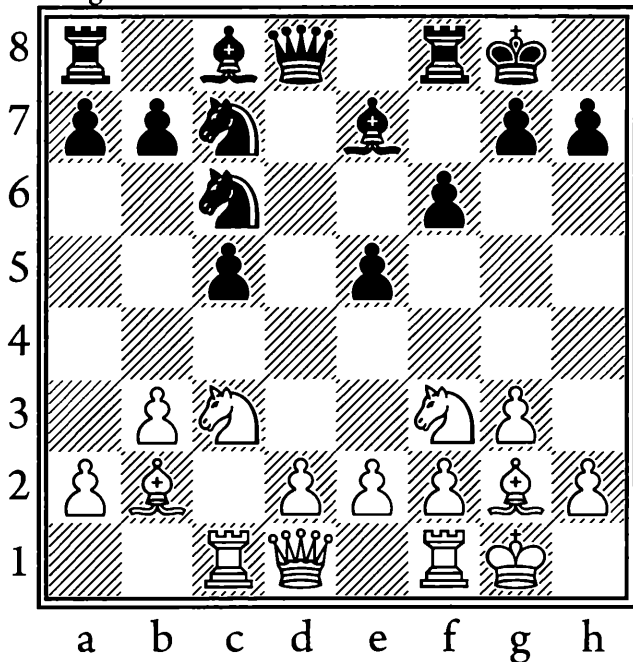
Better than 5...♖b6, since the b6-square will be needed for a pawn, while from c7 the knight can be transferred to d4 or b4. Botvinnik points out that 5...♖c7, together with this whole scheme for arranging the pawns and pieces in the centre, was repeatedly employed by Grandmaster Akiba Rubinstein although it first appeared in a game Mieses – Chigorin (Barmen 1905).

6.♖f3 ♖c6 7.0–0 e5

The initial outlines of the future structure appear: pawns on c5 and e5, knight on c6, operating actively on the centre.

8.b3 ♕e7 9.♕b2 0–0 10.♜c1 f6

Diagram 34



Black erects solid supports for his central pawns and prepares to seize the d4-point with his knight. Should White now succeed in detonating his opponent's centre by e2-e3 and d2-d4 and opening up the game, then his fianchettoed bishops will unleash their full power and his superior piece development will tell.

But White will not be able to implement such a plan effectively. For example, a game Kogan – Lipnitsky (Kharkov 1948) proceeded from the diagram: 11. ♖a4 b6 12. e3 (12. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 13. ♗xa8 ♖xa8 is bad for White) 12... ♗a6 13. ♖e1. Now with 13... ♗d3 Black could have shackled White's entire position. In the game he played to win the exchange with 13... ♖b4, which allowed White to create some complications after 14. d4 exd4 15. exd4 ♖d3 16. dxc5 ♖xe1 17. ♗xe1 ♗xc5 18. ♖xc5.

Instead of 11. ♖a4, Kirillov continued with:

11. ♖e1 ♗f5 12. ♖a4 ♖a6 13. ♗a3

This way White does not allow b7-b6. However, after Black's next move it turns out that White is unable to increase the pressure against c5.

13... ♗a5 14. ♖c2 ♖fd8 15. ♖e3 ♗e6 16. d3

He should have played 16. ♗xc6 to eliminate the threat of ♖c6-d4, but even so, as Botvinnik points out, Black would maintain a plus after 16... bxc6 17. d3 ♖ac8 18. ♗c2 ♖b4.

16... ♖ac8 17. ♖c4 ♗c7 18. ♖d2 b6 19. ♗b2 ♗d7 20. ♖e1

One side displays confusion, the other methodically goes about centralizing.

20... ♖d4 21. ♖c3 ♖b4

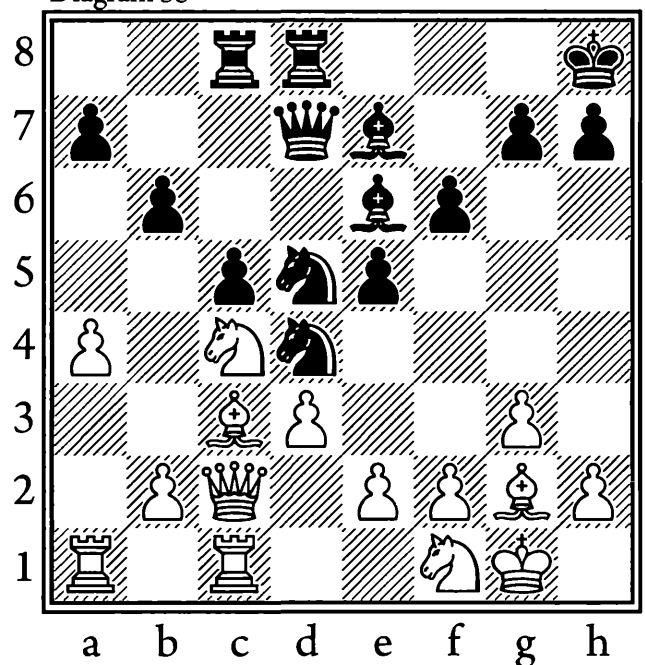
Thus reaching the position in the initial diagram.

This same set-up for Black was also used successfully by Botvinnik in another game.

G. Lisitsyn – M. Botvinnik

Leningrad 1932

Diagram 35



Position after 20... ♖c6-d4!

With very slight alterations (knight on d5 and king on h8), the arrangement of Black's fighting force is just the same as in the game with Kirillov.

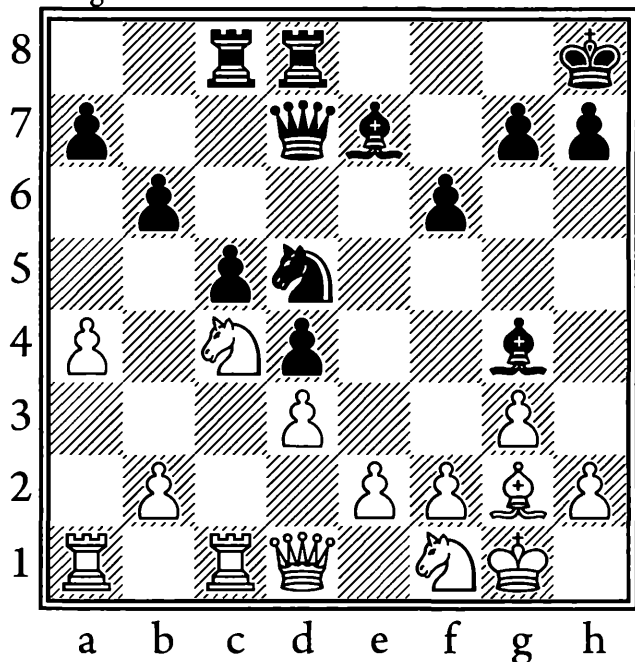
"Black controls the whole board. White cannot create the merest semblance of counter-play; he is compelled to watch quietly while his

opponent draws up his army for the decisive onslaught.” (Botvinnik)

No one is likely to have doubts about the correctness of this statement. Yet there is all the more need to understand how the strength of such a central formation should be exploited to achieve victory. The general method of action in such cases is clearly revealed in the present game.

21. ♖d1 ♙g4! 22. ♙xd4 exd4!

Diagram 36



Botvinnik has forced his opponent to capture the centralized black knight. Why did he do so? And why has he recaptured with the e-pawn, not the c-pawn?

The answer is that by opening the e-file Black acquires the opportunity to exert tremendous pressure with his rooks against White's backward pawn on e2. Conversely if White had had a pawn on c2 instead of e2, Black would have retaken on d4 with his e-pawn. A textbook example of pressure against a backward pawn on c2 in such a position was given by Alekhine in a game with Tarrasch (Carlsbad 1923).

23. ♖d2 ♙f8 (clearing the e-file) 24. ♖e1 ♖e8 25. h4

White's tragedy lies in the fact that he cannot

get rid of his weak pawn on e2, for if it advances, the reply d4xe3 will give him new weaknesses in the d-file.

25... ♙h3 26. ♙f3 ♖e7 27. ♘h2 ♖ce8 28. ♙h1 ♙e6

The bishop heads for the central square d5.

29. b3!

White has nothing with which to oppose Black's plan, so he resorts to traps. If now 29... ♘c3?, then 30. e4! and White rids himself of the weak e2-pawn.

29... ♘b4 30. ♙g2 ♙d5 31. ♘f3 ♖f7

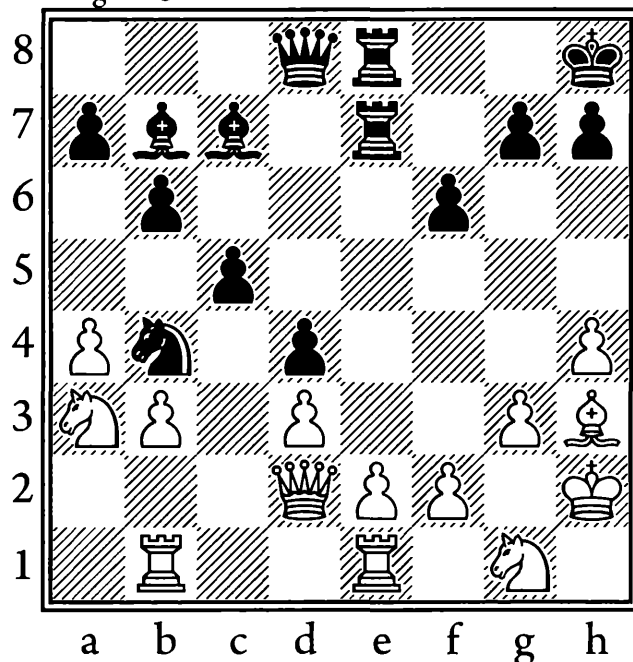
Black temporarily relaxes his pressure in the e-file so as to bring the bishop on f8 into play. At this point young players will do well to observe that Botvinnik does not hasten to launch the concluding attack before all his reserves are brought into action. But then, what makes this possible is White's total lack of counterplay in the present situation.

32. ♙h2 ♙d6 33. ♙h3 ♖d8 34. ♖ab1 ♖fe7

If White exchanges with 35. ♘xd6, he will have one more weakness to defend – on b3.

35. ♘g1 ♙c7 36. ♘a3 ♙b7

Diagram 37



37.♔g2 ♕xg2 38.♖xg2 ♘d5 39.♘c2 ♔d6!
40.♘a3 ♘e3† 41.♖h1 ♘g4 42.♔f4

A move of deadly agony, but by now there was no salvation – for instance 42.♖g2 ♘xf2! 43.♖xf2 ♔xg3† 44.♖f1 ♔e3 45.♘f3 ♔h3† 46.♖g1 ♔h2† 47.♘h2 ♔g3†, and mate next move. If instead 42.♔f1, Black wins with 42...♔d5† 43.f3 ♕xg3 etc.

42...♔xf4 43.gxf4 ♘xf2† 44.♖g2 ♘xd3
0–1

The game lucidly demonstrates how an advantage acquired at the outset can gradually increase until victory is achieved. Thus, in this game Black did the following:

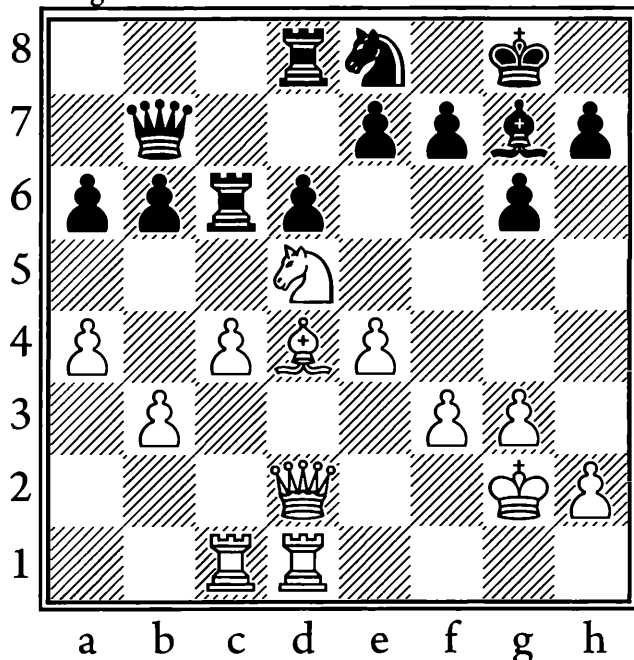
- (1) He created a strong pawn-and-piece centre with a knight on d4.
- (2) Forcing White to exchange this knight, he organized powerful pressure against the pawn on e2.
- (3) Having tied White's pieces to the defence of this pawn, he proceeded to a direct attack on the king.

In the next position, the reader should have no difficulty recognizing the same central pawn-and-piece structure that we have been examining – with colours reversed, of course.

M. Botvinnik – A. Lilienthal

Moscow 1936

Diagram 38

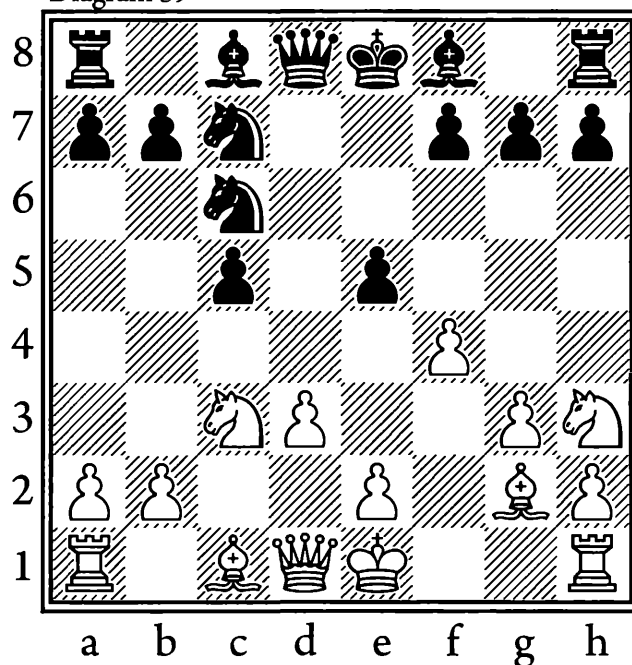


Before chess masters had grasped the nature of the danger which such structures present, Botvinnik was able to score many convincing wins. His achievements in working out various ideas relevant to the opening strategy of the centre have still further underlined the immense significance of a central stronghold in the opening struggle.

Today, many players are improving their mastery of opening play through serious study of the strategy of the centre. For this reason, as is only natural, the struggle against an opponent's pawn-and-piece centre has become a good deal more flexible, subtle and many-sided.

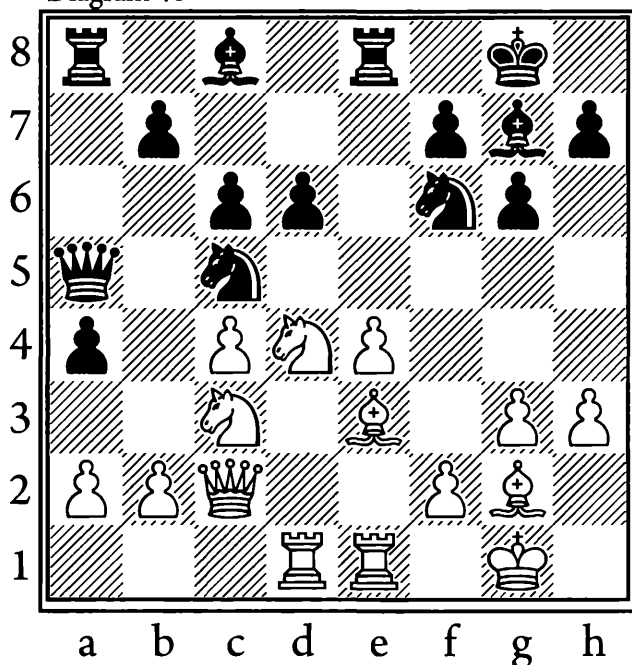
For example, after 1.c4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♔g2 ♘c7 6.d3 ♘c6, the move played today is 7.♘h3, so as to meet 7...e5 with 8.f4!, immediately attacking the black e-pawn.

Diagram 39



The following variation of the King's Indian Defence is characteristic of the fight against the pawn-and-piece centre: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♔g7 4.♘f3 0–0 5.g3 d6 6.♔g2 ♘bd7 7.0–0 e5 8.e4 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c5 10.h3 ♔e8 11.♔e1 a5 12.♔c2 a4 13.♔e3 c6 14.♔ad1 ♔a5, giving the next diagram position.

Diagram 40



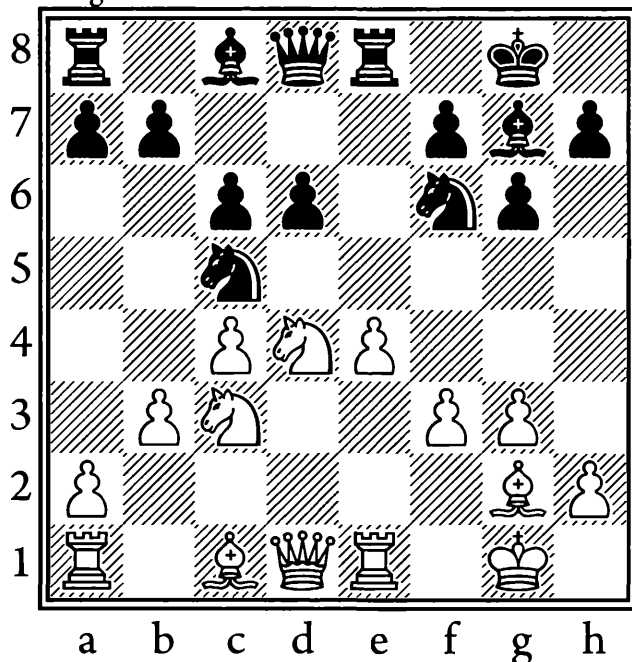
White has been permitted to set up a strong centre with his pieces and pawns. Within the boundary of his own camp, however, Black has fortified all the central squares, preventing the white pieces from invading. In the process he has accepted a weak pawn on d6 – yet the weakness is not easy for White to get at, despite being located on an open file.

For their own part, Black's pieces are concentrating their fire against the centre. Black attempts to shake and shatter the pillars of White's centre (c4 and e4) through converging attacks from the flanks. Given the opportunity, he will try to destroy that centre by playing d6-d5 or f7-f5.

L. Kayev – A. Khavin

Kiev 1940

Diagram 41



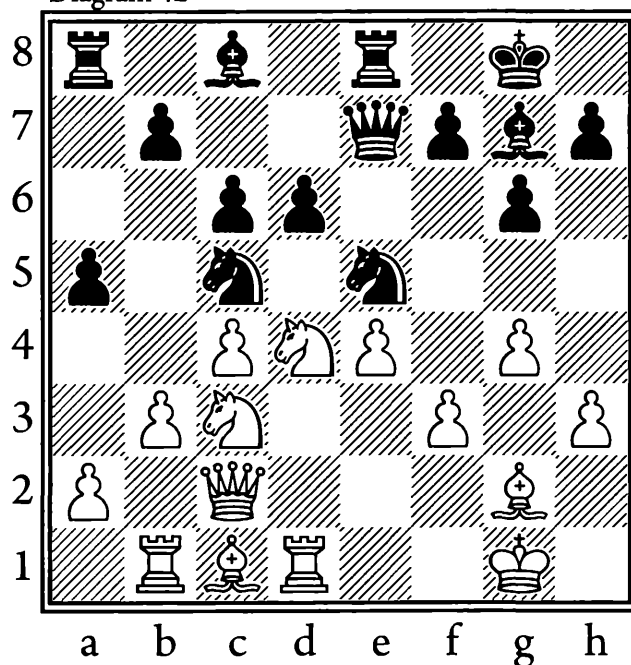
With **12...d5!** Black demolishes his opponent's inadequately fortified pawn-and-piece centre.

13.cxd5 **♞xd5!** (but not 13...cxd5? 14.e5!)
14.♞xd5 **cxd5** **15.♞b2** **dxe4** **16.fxe4** **♞g4!**
17.♞xg4 **♞xd4†** **18.♞xd4** **♞xd4†** **19.♞h1**
♞d3 – and destroying White's centre, Black has seized that most important sector of the board for himself, immediately obtaining a won position.

I. Kan – I. Boleslavsky

Moscow 1952

Diagram 42



This time Black strikes at the centre from the other side, namely with **16...f5!**. White has been trying all he can to prevent this move, even resorting to g2-g4, but his preventive measures have proved inadequate.

17.exf5 **gxf5** **18.gxf5** **♞ed3!**

Now that Black has managed to remove his opponent's centre pawn, the e-file is opened. With the aid of a combination Black exploits this circumstance and organizes the decisive invasion into White's camp:

19.♞xd3 **♞xd3** **20.♞xd3** **♞e1†** **21.♞f1**

21...♖g3† 22.♔h1 ♜e1

Black has a won position. The remaining moves were:

23.♙e3 ♜xh3† 24.♔g1 ♜g3† 25.♔h1 ♜h4† 26.♔g2 ♜xe3 27.♜xe3 ♙xd4 28.♜e8† ♔g7 29.f6† ♙xf6 30.♜e4 ♜g5† 0-1

The refined contemporary methods of fighting against a pawn-and-piece centre are also splendidly illustrated by the next example.

V. Korchnoi – Y. Averbakh

Riga 1954

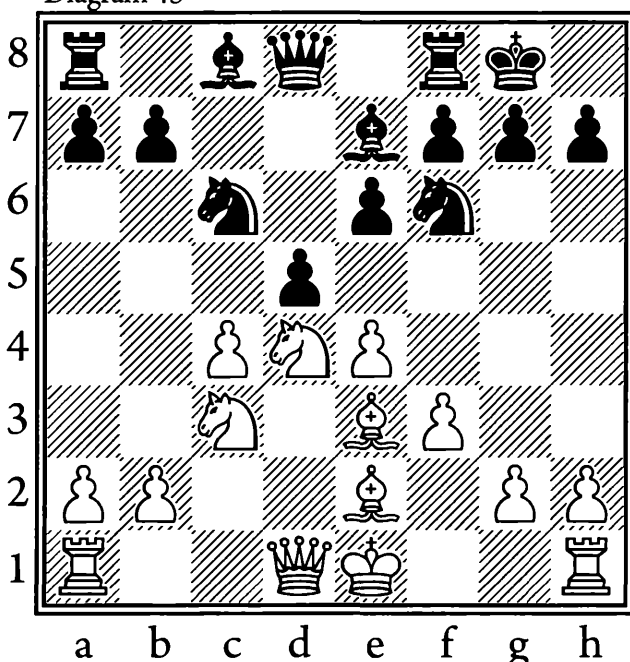
In all the textbooks you read that in the Sicilian Defence it does not pay Black to allow c2-c4, enabling White to create a powerful piece-centre.

However, after 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.f3, although “theory” recommends 5...e5 (aiming to follow with d6-d5), Vladimir Simagin suggested 5...♘c6, not fearing 6.c4. The basis of Simagin’s idea is that with e7-e6 and d6-d5 Black can successfully attack the white centre which had previously seemed unassailable to many players.

6.c4 e6 7.♘c3 ♙e7 8.♙e3 0-0 9.♙e2 d5!

The start of the attack on the centre.

Diagram 43



10.cxd5 exd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 cxd5

Thus nothing is left of White’s centre. True, Black has two isolated pawns, but one of them may turn out to be a dangerous passed pawn in the right circumstances. Meanwhile Averbakh uses the other one to create active play on the queenside. There followed:

14. 0-0 a5! 15.♜f2

White fortifies the second rank (the b2-pawn!), and wants to put pressure on the d5-pawn if he has the chance.

15...♙f6 16.♙d4 ♜b8 17.♙f1 ♙e6 18. b3 ♜b4! 19.♙xf6 ♜xf6 20.♜c1 ♜fb8 21.♜c5 ♜d8 22.♙d3 g6 23.♜c2 a4!

Averbakh has seized the initiative.

The examples we have examined show what a deep gulf separates the modern views on the centre from the naive notions of nineteenth-century players. Today the fierce struggle for the centre embraces an entire complex of influences which the pawns and pieces exert not only on the squares e4, e5, d4 and d5, but on the wider central sphere. When we conquer a central stronghold with pawns, pieces, or a powerful combination of both, its effectiveness depends on whether we can maintain and exploit the positions we have seized, or whether they will be wrested from us by the opponent’s energetic counter-attack.

Summing up, we may say that on the chess battlefield, the centre is the main high ground dominating the terrain. If it is in our opponent’s possession, we spare no effort to attack it. If we have occupied this high ground ourselves, we do everything to consolidate our positions there, in order to repel the opponent’s counter-attacks and prepare to deal powerful blows in various directions.

Today it is becoming more and more difficult

to outplay an opponent in the opening by exploiting the errors he makes in handling the strategy of the centre.

For by now it has become a universal conviction that *the centre is the soul of the opening*.

Chapter 1

The Centre and the Flanks

Compared with the centre, the flanks in the opening play a lesser role. The centre occupies a dominating position with regard to the flanks. Therefore when the opponent undertakes an insufficiently prepared flank operation in the opening, we often manage to frustrate this diversion with a timely strike in the centre.

The strategic rationale of such a strike is this. Gaining control of the centre allows us to create counter-threats that are more dangerous. Wishing to prevent this, our opponent will be forced to concentrate his main attention on the centre. And then the flank operations that he started earlier will be broken off. Exploiting the weaknesses that have formed there, we can often organize a strong attack on that same flank where our opponent attempted to do so.

I. Boleslavsky – G. Stoltz

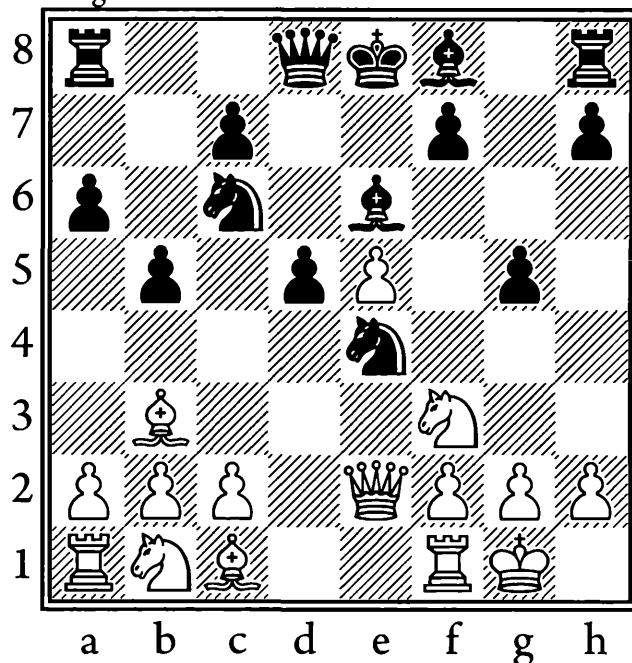
Stockholm 1948

After the moves

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0–0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5
♙e6 9.♚e2 g5

the following position was reached.

Diagram 44



Black's last move 9...g5!? would be well-founded if, for instance, White were compelled to defend with 10.h3. Then Black could work up a strong attack on the wing by playing 10...g4!. But White has no need to defend himself. Boleslavsky strikes a powerful blow in the centre and puts paid to his opponent's flank operation.

10.c4!!

Now Black has no time to continue his "offensive", since 10...g4 would be answered by 11.cxd5! ♙xd5 12.♘g5! ♙xb3 (12...♘xg5 is no better: 13.♙xg5 ♚xg5 14.♙xd5 ♘d4 15.♚e4 ♘f3† 16.♙h1) 13.♘xe4 ♙c4 14.♚xg4

♙xf1 15.♘f6† ♔e7 16.♙g5. Black's attack on the flank has been condemned to failure, while in the centre his position is hopeless.

An ingenious but inadequate reply to 10.c4!! would be 10...dxc4, aiming to meet 11.♞d1 (not 11.♞xe4? ♙d5!) by sacrificing the queen with 11...cxb3! 12.♞xd8† ♞xd8. Black then has a wealth of counterplay. However, Boleslavsky indicates that after 10...dxc4 he would have continued 11.♙c2! ♘c5 12.♞d1 ♞c8 13.♙xg5 (or 13.♘xg5), with a dangerous attack against the black king which is stuck in the centre.

10...bxc4

This way Black maintains his centre. On the other hand White can now carry out a different idea: he suddenly organizes an invasion via the kingside which was sorely weakened by Black's 9...g5.

11.♙a4! ♙d7

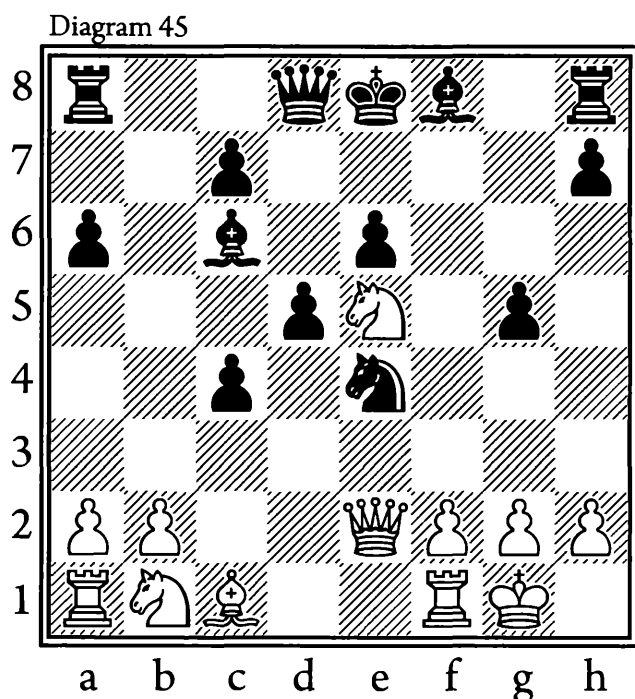
Now with the black bishop diverted to d7 (11...♞d7 12.♘d4 would have been worse still), White's centre pawn delivers a blow:

12.e6!

Opening up the black king from the flank.

12...fxe6 13.♙xc6 ♙xc6 14.♘e5!

Accomplishing White's aim!



By attacking the bishop on c6, White invades his opponent's kingside which 9...g5 irreparably weakened.

14...♞d6?

Stoltz could have offered more stubborn resistance only by sacrificing a piece, for example 14...h5 15.♘xc6 ♞d6 16.♘d4 ♙g7, after which White would still have had to work hard in order to win.

15.♞h5† ♔e7

Alas, Black has no g7-g6 available.

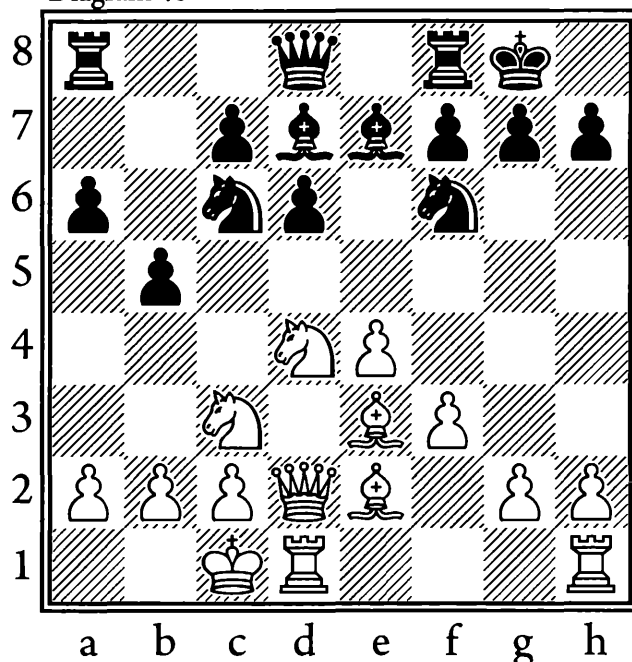
16.♙xg5† ♘xg5 17.♞xg5† ♔e8 18.♞h5† ♔e7 19.♞f7† ♔d8 20.♞f6† ♔c8 21.♞xh8

A rook down, Black could quietly have resigned. But no doubt Stoltz did not want to read in the reports that he had been crushed in 20 moves, so he dragged out his hopeless resistance until move 34.

Let's see another example.

A. Nimzowitsch – N.N.

Diagram 46



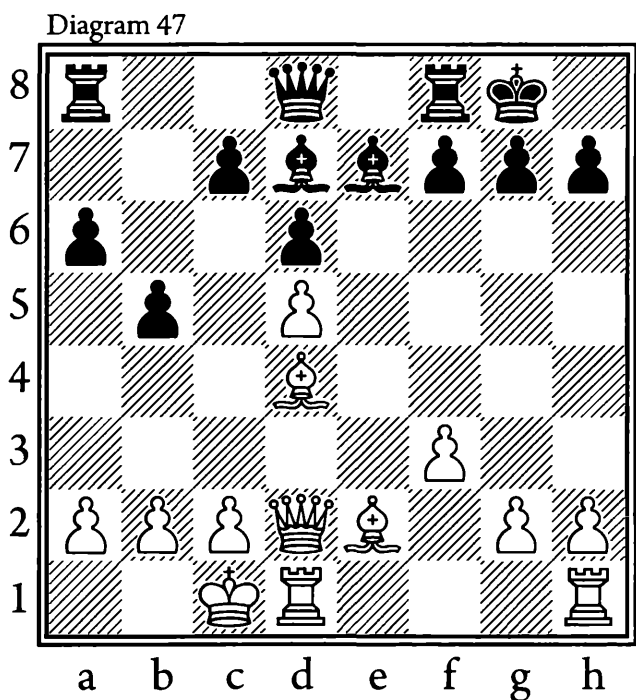
In this game between Nimzowitsch and a Riga amateur, the diagram position arose from 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 d6

5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.♙e2 ♙e7 7.♙e3 ♙d7 8.♚d2 a6 9.f3 0–0 10.0–0–0 b5. I give the ensuing moves with Nimzowitsch's comments, taken from his book *My System*.

"The attack seems hardly in place here, so that my opponent's expression, 'Now we're in for it,' charged as it was with the lust of battle, struck one as all the prettier. I understood him at once; he clearly expected the answer g2–g4 with a consequent race between the pawns on both sides according to the motto 'who gets in first wins.'"

"What did happen however was 11.♘d5. With this move, by which an outpost station in the d-file is occupied, White obeys another principle of positional play, namely that premature flank attacks should be punished by play in the centre (= break through in, or occupation of the centre)."

"There followed 11...♘xd5 12.exd5 ♘xd4 13.♙xd4, and White has very much the better game."



"He has a centralized position which cannot possibly be taken away from him by, say, 13...♙f6 14.f4 ♖e8 15.♙f3 followed by ♖h1–e1; and moreover Black has a disorganized queen's

wing which exposes bad weaknesses for the endgame."

In the foregoing examples, a premature flank attack was refuted in the one case (Boleslavsky – Stoltz) by sharp, combinative means (10.c4!!) – and in the other (Nimzowitsch – NN) by purely positional actions. Yet White's strategy in both games was the same: frustrating an attack on the flank by striking in the centre.

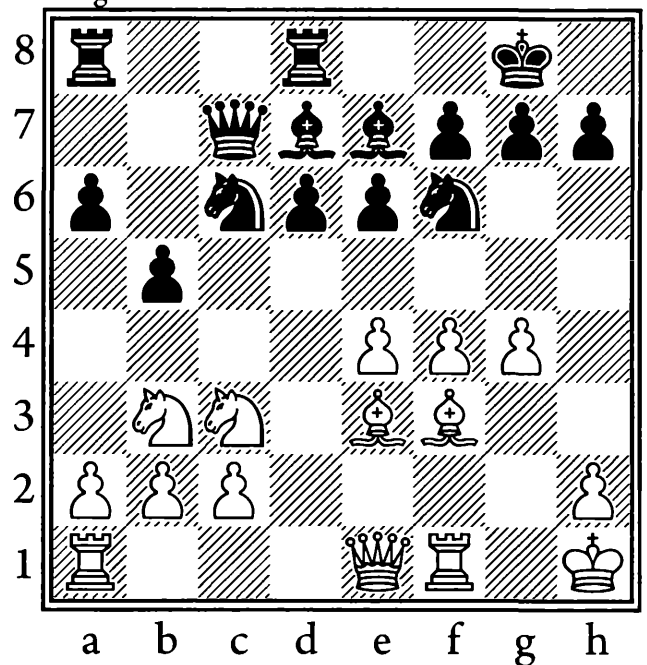
The following game is another highly instructive example on this theme.

A. Vajda – A. Kotov

Budapest 1949

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♙e2 e6 7.0–0 ♚c7 8.f4 ♘c6 9.♙h1 ♙e7 10.♙f3 ♙d7 11.♘b3 0–0 12.♙e3 ♖fd8 13.♚e1 b5 14.g4

Diagram 48



At the point of transition from opening to midgame, White has started a direct attack on the kingside. This attack looks very dangerous at first sight, especially considering that before embarking on it White took some preventive measures against his opponent's counter-actions in the centre. Nevertheless Kotov finds it possible to break through in that area.

There followed:

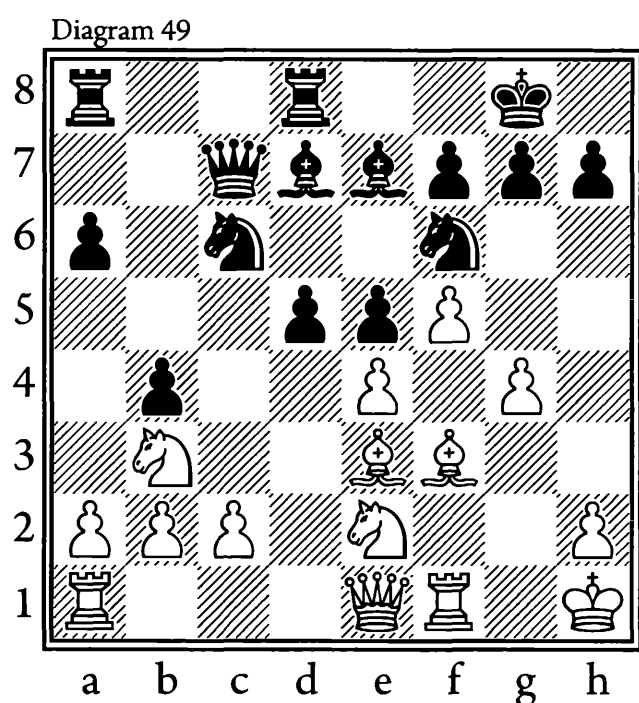
14...b4!

Black first drives away the knight on c3 which is putting pressure on the centre, then after the reply, he goes into action there.

15.♖e2 e5! 16.f5

16.fxe5 is obviously very bad, on account of 16...♖xe5! attacking the bishop on f3 and the pawn on g4, and so is 16.g5 ♖g4 17.♙xg4 ♙xg4 18.f5 d5! etc.

16...d5!!



In contrast to the Boleslavsky – Stoltz game, where White sacrificed a pawn with 10.c4!! but obtained a winning attack for it, Kotov is now giving up a pawn for purely positional considerations. If White takes it with 17.exd5, the intention is to play 17...e4! 18.dxc6 exf3 19.cxd7 fxe2 20.♙xe2 ♖xd7, after which White cannot even dream of attacking, given his open king position and the weakness of various pawns. Black's initiative would then fully compensate for the pawn sacrificed.

All the same, that continuation was the most acceptable one at White's disposal. Instead he carries on with his flank attack, oblivious to the onset of the crisis.

17.g5 ♖xe4 18.♙xe4 dxe4 19.f6 ♙f8 20.fxg7 ♙xg7 21.♙h4 ♖e7!

In the centre Black has achieved total superiority. But on the flank White still has a number of threats, such as 22.♖xf7! followed by ♙xh7 and ♖f1†, or 22.♖g3 and then ♖h5 or ♖f5. With his last move Kotov eliminates the danger. It is only then that he goes on the offensive himself.

22.♖g3

Black can answer 22.♖xf7 with the intermediate move 22...♖f5!.

22...♖g6

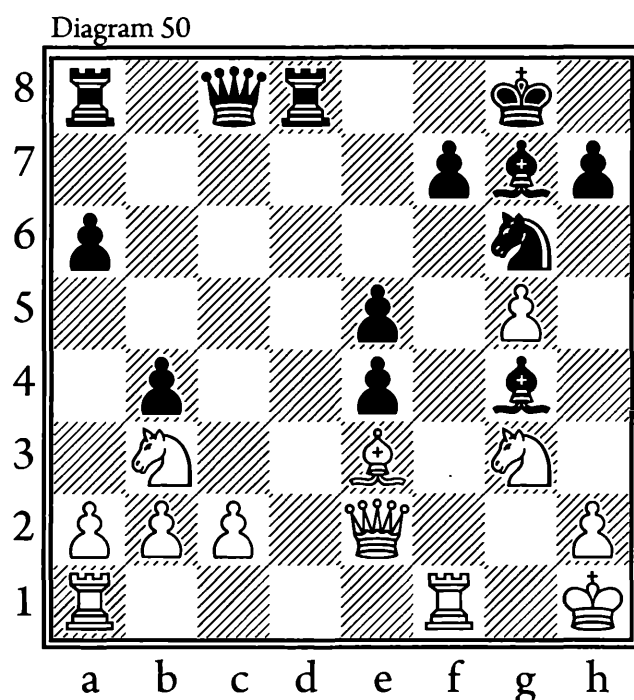
Now the white queen is forced to occupy h5.

23.♙h5 ♙c8!

Covering f5 and threatening to win the queen.

24.♙e2 ♙g4!

Black has achieved a won position.



It is characteristic that in this game too, the strike in the centre was followed up by an invasion via the very wing which turned out to have been sorely weakened by the offensive White had undertaken there.

The above examples illustrate how risky it is to resort to a flank attack in the opening when your own position in the centre is inadequately secured. Conversely, when your opponent has recourse to such unfounded flank diversions, you should always look for a possibility to refute his attack by a counterstroke in the centre.

Thus we may formulate the following rule: *the solidity of your own position in the centre determines the success of your attack undertaken on the flank.*

Of course it should not be thought that this rule is suited to all occasions in life. Chess rules generally can only be applied in conjunction with a concrete, imaginative approach to the position.

The next game, for example, is a case where a player undertook a flank attack in the opening while possessing a sturdy position in the centre, but nonetheless came to grief:

J.-J. Rousseau – Prince Conti

1759

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.c3 ♔e7

The defence 4...♔e7, followed by 5.d3 d6, was examined as far back as 1490, in the Göttingen Manuscript.

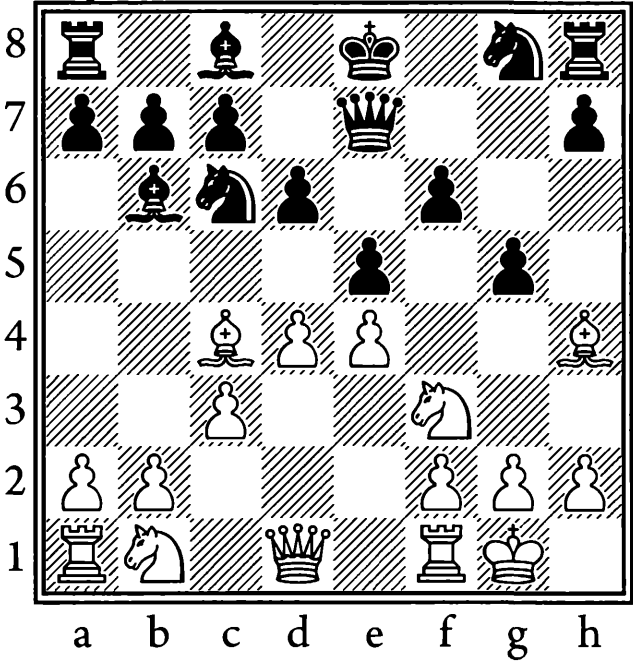
5.d4 ♙b6 6.0–0 d6 7.♙g5

This whole variation was worked out by the famous Italian master Gioachino Greco. The latter (born around 1600) also analysed a number of other lines of the Italian Game or Giuoco Piano (Italian for “quiet, placid game”), which was known as long ago as the 15th century. He included these variations in a book, written in 1625 but first published only after his death (London 1656). The book was subsequently reprinted and translated into several languages.

White’s last move was considered by Greco to be the best in the position, on the grounds that after 7.h3 (to prevent the knight on f3 from being pinned) 7...♘f6 8.♙g5 h6 9.♙h4 g5 10.♙g3 (or 10.♘xg5 hxg5 11.♙xg5 ♖g8! and White does not have compensation for the piece), Black – with a strong centre – has a dangerous attack on the wing.

7...f6 8.♙h4 g5

Diagram 51



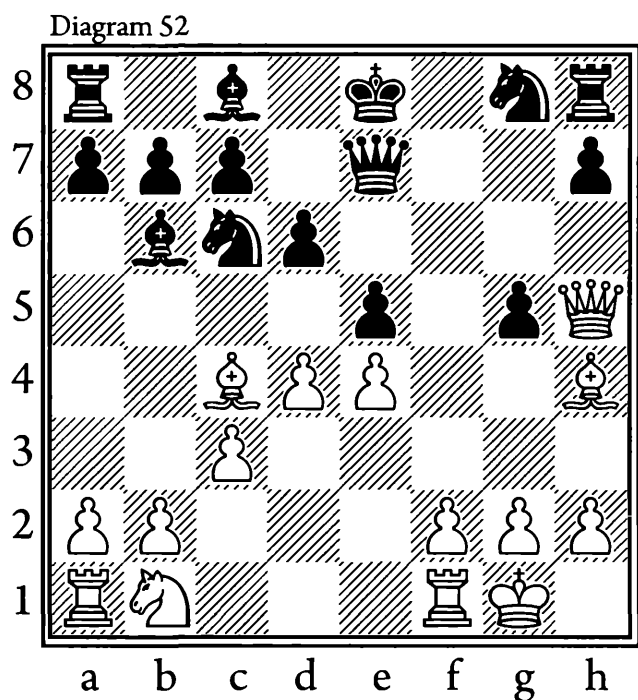
Black undertakes an opening attack on the wing, which promises fair chances of success after 9.♙g3 h5. It is easy to see that in this case White cannot refute the attack by means of a blow in the centre. By blindly following the rule that was stated earlier, regarding the interaction between the centre and the flanks, you could easily conclude that Black’s attack was positionally justified.

Yet any position may have peculiarities which rob a given rule of all its significance, since some other rule will be more relevant. That is precisely the case in the variation we are looking at:

9.♘xg5! fxg5 10.♔h5†

With open lines and an exposed black king, the sacrifice of a piece for two pawns allows

White to work up a dangerous attack irrespective of his opponent's reply.



Greco gives these two variations:

(a) 10...♔d8 11.♙xg5 ♘f6 12.♖h6 ♜f8 13.f4! exd4 14.e5! dxc3† 15.♔h1 cxb2 16.exf6 ♞xf6 17.♖xf6! bxa1=♚ 18.♖xa1 ♙d4 19.♙xe7† ♔xe7 20.♘c3 and White wins.

(b) 10...♔d7 11.♙xg5 ♖f8 12.♙f7 ♘ce7 (the threat was 13.♖h3 mate) 13.dxe5 h6 14.♙h4 ♞h7 15.e6† ♔d8 16.♖f3 c6 17.c4 ♔c7 18.♖a3! and again White wins, thanks to the threats of ♙g3 and ♞d1.

A third reply – 10...♔f8 – occurred in the actual game, which continued as follows:

11.♙xg5 ♖g7 12.f4!

This and the following moves give us reason to suppose that Jean-Jacques Rousseau was familiar with Greco's analyses.

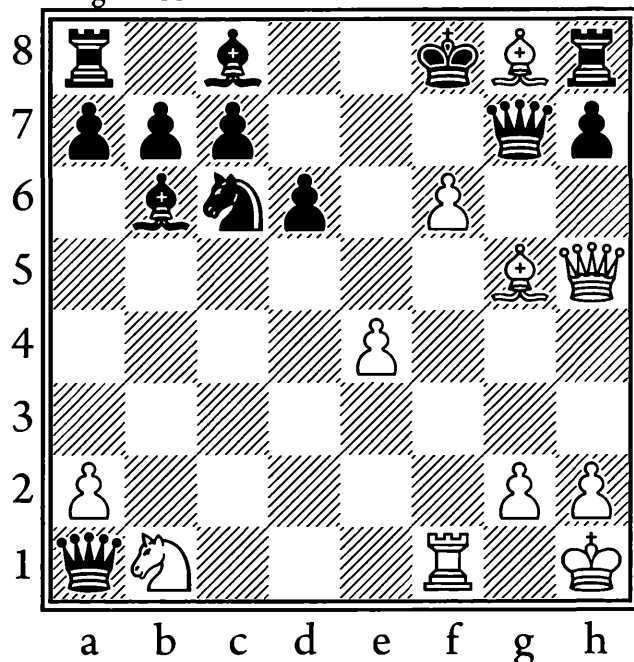
12...exd4 13.f5!

White sacrifices a rook and allows Black a second queen:

13...dxc3† 14.♔h1 cxb2 15.♙xg8 bxa1=♚ 16.f6!

Black resigned, as he cannot prevent mate or the loss of both queens.

Diagram 53



There is a picturesque variation in 16...♔xg8 17.fxg7 ♙e6 18.gxh8=♚† ♖xh8 19.♙f6, when the white pawn on the long diagonal has repeated exactly the same exploit as the black one – promoting to a queen and eliminating a rook at the same time. In all, a brilliant miniature from the 18th century.

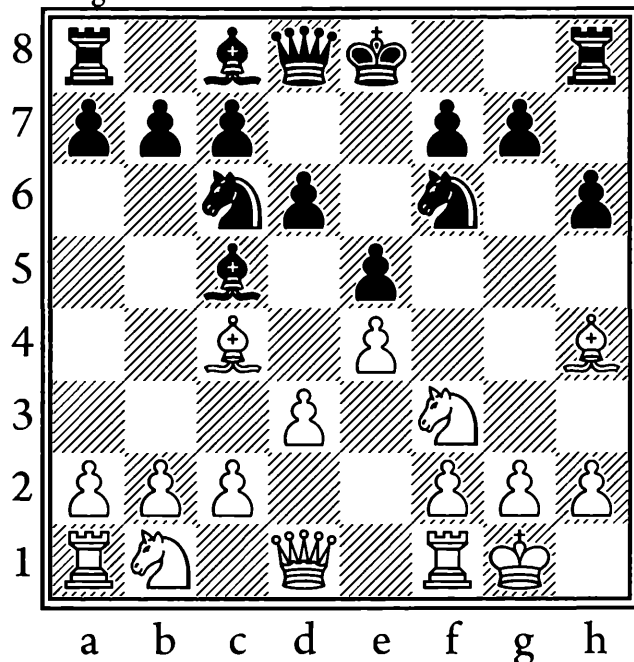
Let us now turn to some examples where a sturdy position in the centre *does* determine the success of a flank attack in the opening.

S. Dubois – W. Steinitz

London 1862

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.0–0 d6 5.d3 ♘f6 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4

Diagram 54

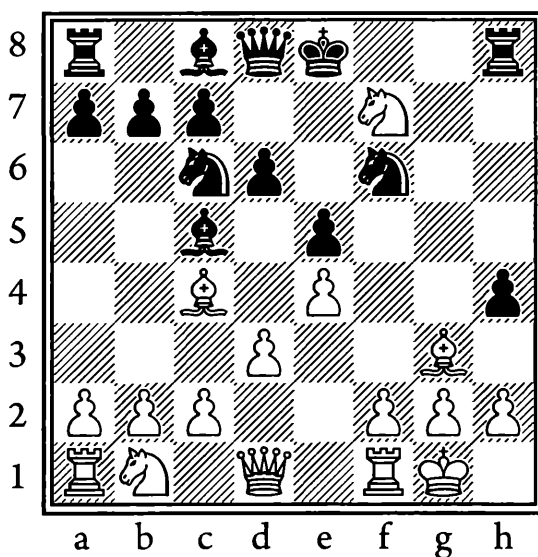


Black's central position is very solid. This enables him to begin a successful attack on the wing where his opponent's king has castled:

7...g5 8.♖g3 h5!

The possibility of 8...h5! depends on a profound and attractive combination at Black's disposal, involving a queen or rook sacrifice. If Black did not have such a combination available, he could develop his attack by ♖c8-g4, with h6-h5 to follow. But since the combination exists, let us take a look at it. It occurs after 9.♘g5 h4 10.♘xf7. Now White has two pawns for the piece he is losing (as in Rousseau – Conti), and his opponent's queen and rook are also *en prise*. Nonetheless it is Black who has a devastating attack.

Diagram 55



10...hxg3!! (an alternative, not as pretty but no less strong, is 10...♖e7 11.♘h8 hxg3, and now 12.hxg3 ♖h7! winning in a few moves, or 12.♘f7 ♖xf2† 13.♖xf2 gxf2† 14.♘xf2 ♘g4† 15.♔g3 ♖f6 16.♖f3 ♖g7 and again Black has a winning attack) 11.♘xd8 (for 11.♘h8 see the last note) 11...♖g4! and Black wins against any reply, for example:

(a) 12.♘xc6 gxf2† 13.♔h1 ♖xd1 14.♖xd1 ♘g4 15.h3 bxc6 etc.

(b) 12.♘f7 ♖h5 13.♖xg4 ♘xg4 14.hxg3 ♘d4 15.♘c3 c6 16.a3 d5!, and White is in a bad way.

(c) 12.♖d2 ♘d4 13.♘c3 ♘f3†!! (Chigorin played like this in one of his games) 14.gxf3 ♖xf3, and mate is unavoidable.

In these lines with the queen sacrifice (they were published by I. Löwenthal in the *Quarterly Chronicle* for April 1896), the idea of the opening flank attack is revealed in an exceptionally bright light.

White can avert the whole combination and try to stem his opponent's offensive by playing **9.h4!**. But even then, after 9...♖g4, Black has a dangerous attack. Dubois – Steinitz continued:

10.c3

10.hxg5 could be met by 10...h4!. White realizes the sheer hopelessness of defending on the wing, and therefore tries to create complications in the centre. But in the present case this method misfires, as Black's central position is too robust.

10...♖d7! 11.d4 exd4 12.e5

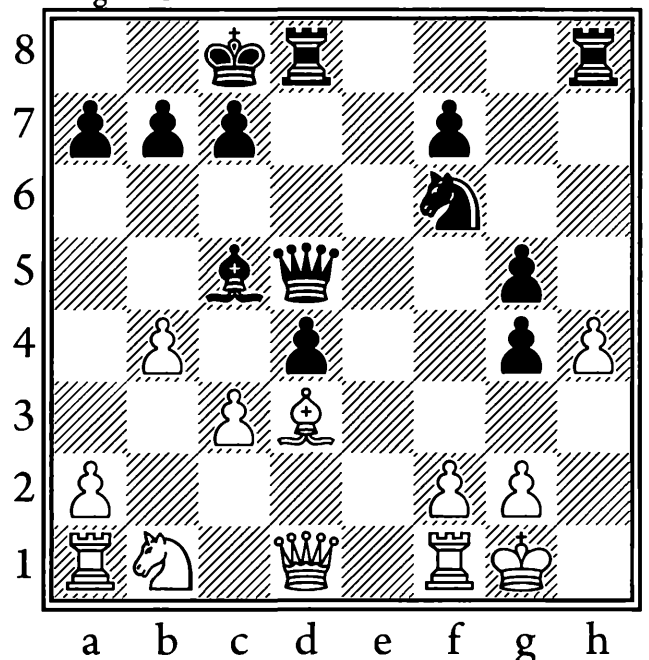
Ingenious, but that is all.

12...dxe5 13.♖xe5 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♖f5!

Stronger than 14...♖xd1 15.♘xd7 ♘xd7 16.♖e1† and 17.♖xd1.

15.♘xg4 hxg4 16.♖d3 ♖d5 17.b4 0-0-0!

Diagram 56



Sacrificing a piece, Steinitz steps up his attack.

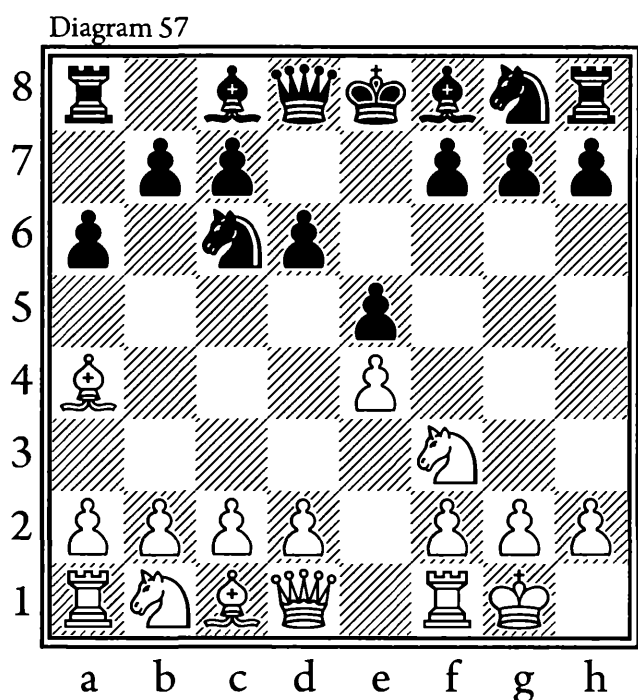
18.c4 ♖c6 19.bxc5 ♜xh4 20.f3 ♜dh8
21.fxc4 ♜e8 22.♞e1 ♜e3† 23.♞xe3
dxe3 24.g3 ♜h1† 25.♔g2 ♜8h2† 26.♔f3
♜xf1† 27.♙xf1 ♜f2† 28.♔xe3 ♜xf1

White can resign.

Em. Lasker – D. Janowski

New York 1924

In the Ruy Lopez, after 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3
♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6, White usually
continues with 5.c3 or 5.♙xc6†. He very rarely
opts for 5.0–0



– because of the reply 5...♙g4!

Keres explains: “Castling is premature here, since Black has not yet disclosed his plan of development and can obtain an attack on the kingside. Threatening 6...b5 followed by 7...♘d4, Black most energetically exploits the defects of 5.0–0”.

6.c3 ♘f6 7.♞e1 ♙e7 8.h3?

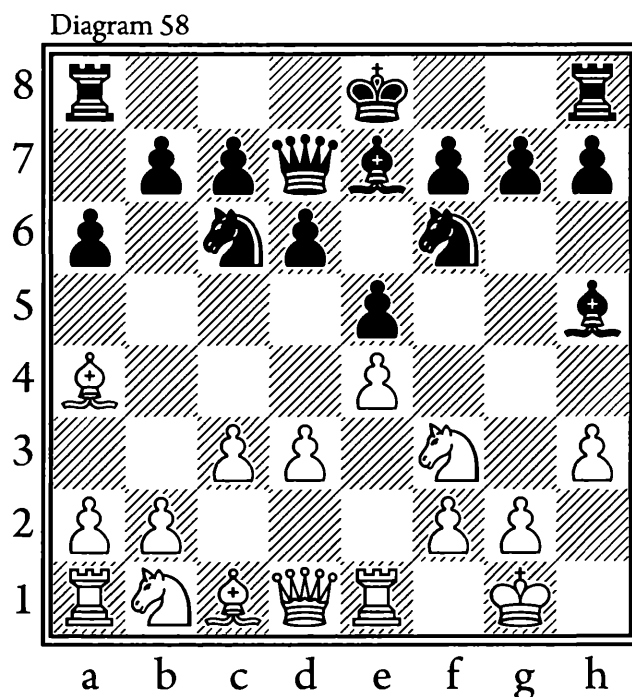
“An opening error entailing grave consequences. It would have been best to play 8.d3 at once. White should only play h2-h3 after

he has brought his queen’s knight to g3 (via d2-f1) and after Black has castled. The difference this makes will presently become clear.” (Alekhine)

8...♙h5 9.d3

9.d4, creating tension in the centre, is no good while the knight on f3 is pinned.

9...♞d7!



“A subtle move, after which Black has a clear advantage. The idea of this move is, in the first place, to enable an immediate kingside pawn storm (for instance 10.♘bd2 g5! etc., or 10.♙e3 h6 with g7-g5 etc. to follow); secondly, to prevent *White’s* g2-g4 (in view of ♘xg4 etc.); and thirdly, to prepare to castle queenside if appropriate. Grasping the full extent of the danger straight away, Lasker tries to mitigate any direct attack on his king by means of some exchanges.” (Alekhine)

10.♙xc6 ♞xc6 11.♙g5

Even now, however, Alekhine’s recommendation – 11...h6 12.♙xf6 ♙xf6 – would have left Black with a clear plus. Janowski played more weakly with 11...♙g6.

In contrast to the Dubois – Steinitz game, where Black actually attacked on the wing, the

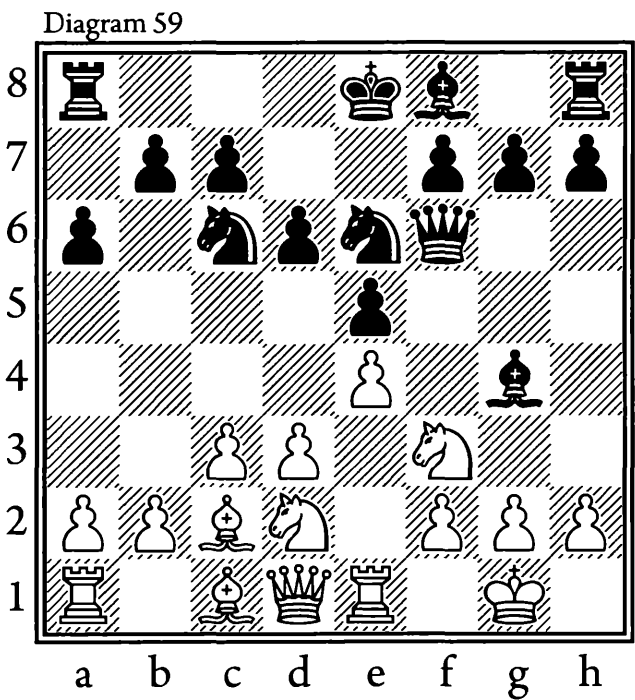
threat of such an attack in Lasker – Janowski was merely “in the air”. But even that proved sufficient to guarantee Black the advantage.

V. Zurakhov – I. Lipnitsky

Odessa 1949

In the same variation **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6 5. 0–0 ♙g4 6. c3 ♘f6 7.♞e1**, in place of 7...♙e7 (as played by Janowski) Black may carry out an original manoeuvre which pursues the very same end – an attack on the flank:

7...♘d7 8. d3 ♞f6 9.♘bd2 ♘c5 10.♙c2 ♘e6



This knight has already moved four times in the opening, yet it is thanks to this very piece that Black is shaping up quite effectively for the flank attack. Any counter-strokes by White in the centre are thwarted, while the knight threatens to invade on f4.

The game continued:

11.h3 ♙xf3

11...h5 would not work in view of 12.hxg4 hxg4 13.♘h2 ♞h4 14.♘df1! etc.

12.♞xf3

12.♘xf3 would be answered by 12...g5! with a strong attack.

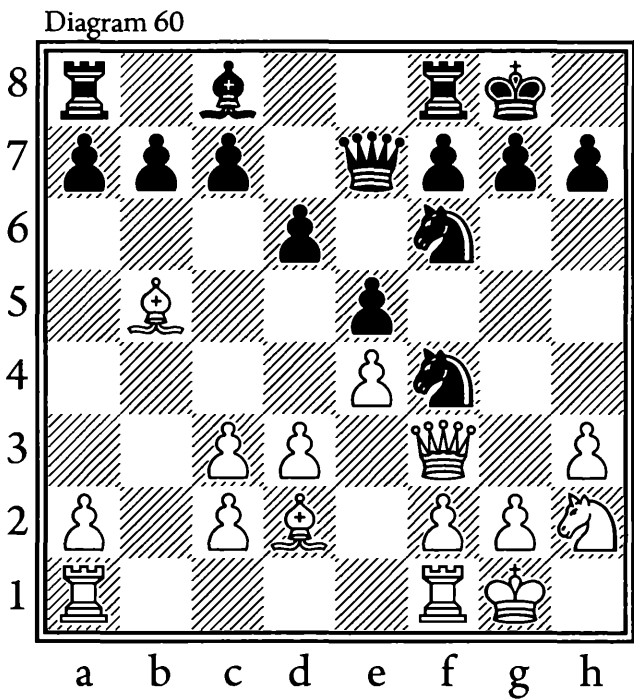
12...♘f4 13.♘f1 g5 14.♘e3 ♘e7! 15.d4

Once again, the attempt to attack in the centre brings no success. Black can calmly proceed with his flank offensive – which he did, by playing:

15...h5

E. Poliak – I. Lipnitsky

Kiev 1948



The solidity of the position in the centre allowed Black to start a very strong attack against the king by playing **12...g5!**. There followed: **13.♞fe1**

To bring the bishop back from b5 to f1, defending g2.

13...c6 14.♙c4 ♖h8 15.d4 ♞g8

15...exd4?? would be a gross strategic error. With the game opening up in the centre, the advantage would pass to White.

16.♙f1 g4 17.hxg4 ♙xg4 18.♘xg4 ♞xg4

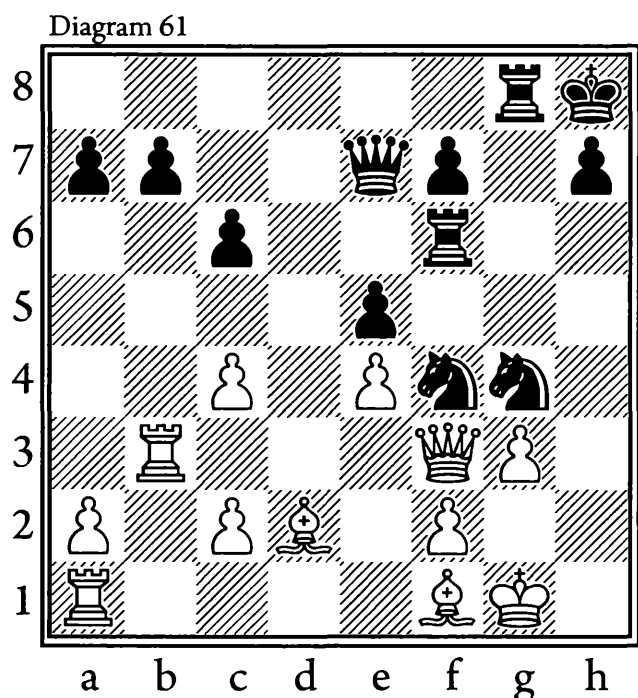
19. g3 ♖ag8 20. ♖e3

White has done all he can to fortify g3, but after:

20... ♖4g6!

His situation is hopeless, as he cannot avert a strike against f2. Play continued:

21. dxe5 dxe5 22. c4 ♖g4 23. ♖b3 ♖f6!



Black wins the queen or gives mate. Possible variations are:

(a) 24. ♖h1 ♖c5! 25. ♖e3 ♖xe3 26. ♖xe3 ♖xg3† 27. ♖xg3 ♖e2† 28. ♖h2 ♖xf2† 29. ♖g2 ♖h6† 30. ♖h3 ♖xh3† 31. ♖xh3 ♖f4† etc.

(b) 24. ♖d1 ♖xf2! 25. ♖xf2 ♖d3† 26. ♖g2 (or 26. ♖e2 ♖f2† 27. ♖xd3 ♖xg3† 28. ♖e3 ♖xe3† 29. ♖xe3 ♖c5† 30. ♖d3 ♖d4 mate) 26... ♖f2† 27. ♖h3 ♖e6† 28. g4 ♖xd2! and wins.

The game continuation proved no better:

24. gxf4 ♖e3† 25. ♖g3

Or 25. ♖h2 ♖xf1† 26. ♖xf1 ♖h6†.

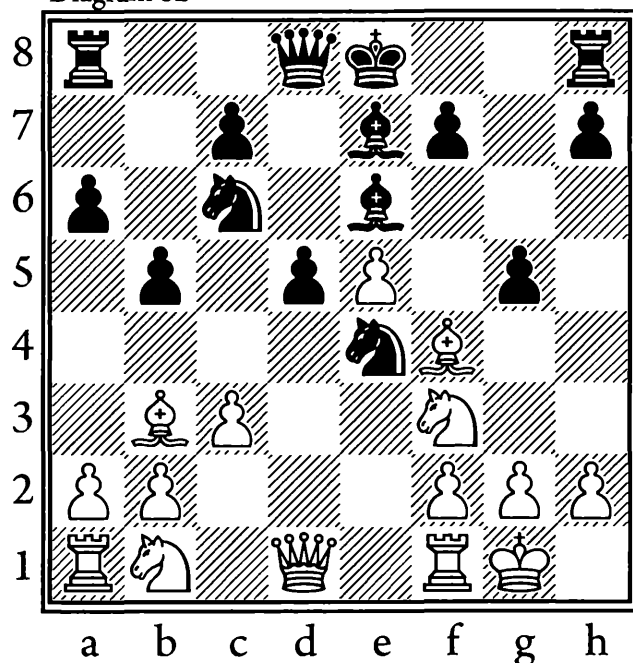
25... exf4 26. ♖xg8† ♖xg8 27. fxe3 ♖g6† 28. ♖f2 ♖h4†

Black wins in a few more moves.

We will consider a few more examples of flank attacks in the opening which depend for their success on a stabilized centre.

In the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez, after 1. e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♖c6 3. ♖b5 a6 4. ♖a4 ♖f6 5. 0–0 ♖xe4 6. d4 b5 7. ♖b3 d5 8. dxe5 ♖e6 9. c3 ♖e7 10. ♖f4, Black immediately goes in for an attack on the flank with 10...g5!

Diagram 62



This is similar to the Boleslavsky – Stoltz game (page 37), but the difference is that this time White lacks a counter-stroke in the centre.

After 11. ♖e3 (or 11. ♖g3 h5! and White is in trouble) 11...g4 12. ♖fd2, Keres recommends 12... ♖g5, with the sample continuation 13. f4 gxf3 14. ♖xf3 ♖xf3† 15. ♖xf3 ♖xe5 16. ♖h5 ♖g4 17. ♖d4 ♖g8 18. ♖d2 c5 19. ♖xh7 ♖d7 20. ♖g7 c4 and Black has the advantage.

In all the examples we have just looked at, Black's attack involved g7-g5, a move which by this time, of course, no one would dream of calling "suicidal" (the "hara-kiri move", as Tarrasch put it).

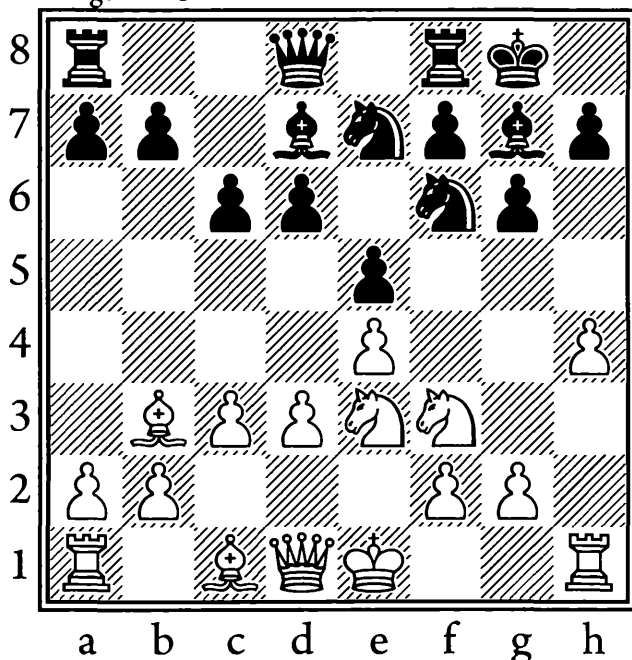
Let's turn to some more examples of flank attacks in the opening.

W. Steinitz – Em. Lasker

New York 1894

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♘f6 4.d3 d6
5.c3 ♙d7 6.♙a4 g6 7.♘bd2 ♙g7 8.♘c4
0–0 9.♘e3 ♘e7 10.♙b3 c6 11.h4

Diagram 63



Leaving his king in the centre, Steinitz has started an immediate flank attack with his last move.

11...♙c7 12.♘g5 d5

Black begins his counterplay in the centre.

13.f3 ♜ad8 14.g4 dxe4 15.fxe4 h6

Black may have thought he was repelling the attack with this move, but he is in for a surprise.

16.♞f3!! ♙e8

Lasker declines the sacrifice, as after 16...hxg5 17.hxg5 ♘h7 18.♘f5! he would be facing a virtually irresistible attack. Instead he works up some pressure of his own along the d-file.

17.♙c2 ♘d7 18.♘h3 ♘c5

On c5 the black knight is quite firmly established: 19.b4 would merely weaken the white king's protection.

19.♘f2

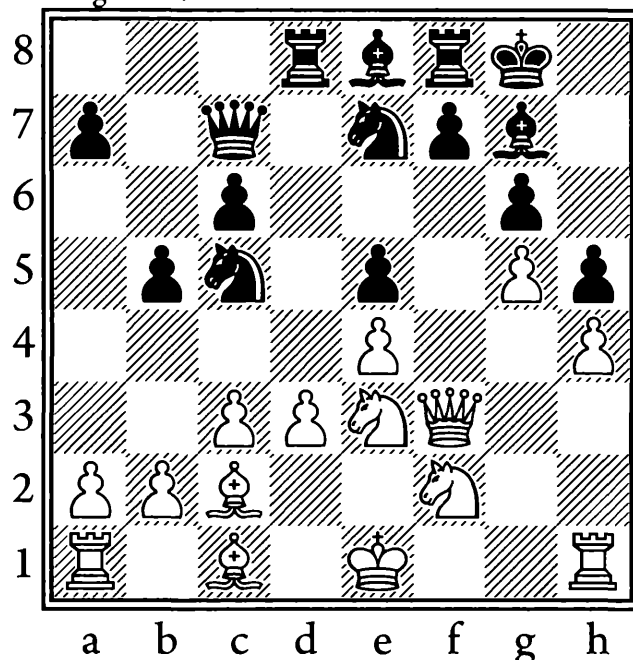
Black is attacking the d3 and White simply defends it.

19...b5

Played in the interests of counter-attack. After the game Lasker judged 19...f6 to be stronger.

20.g5 h5

Diagram 64



21.♘f5!

In the Ruy Lopez the sacrifice of a white knight on f5 has become traditional. Acceptance of this sacrifice leads to swift defeat for Black.

21...gxf5? 22.exf5 f6 23.g6 ♘xg6 24.fxg6 ♙xg6 25.♞g1 e4

Aiming to open the centre files for a counter-attack against the white king, but by now it is too late.

26.dxe4 ♔h7 27.♞xg6!

The 58-year-old Steinitz conducts the whole game with youthful freshness.

27...♔xg6 28.♞f5† ♔f7 29.♞xh5† ♔g8 30.♞xc5 ♞e5 31.♙e3

Black's position is hopeless.

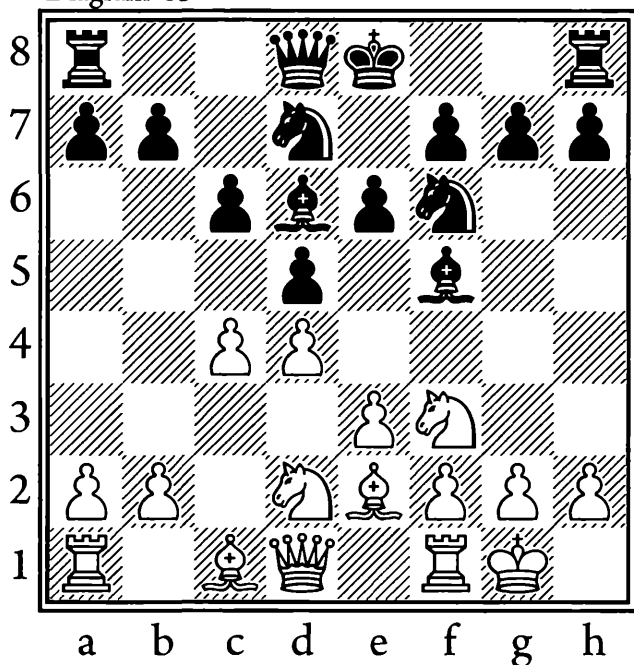
One of the most interesting instances of an opening flank attack was seen in the following game.

H. Kmochn – A. Alekhine

Vienna 1922

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.c4 c6 4.e3 ♙f5
5.♘bd2 e6 6.♙e2 ♘bd7 7.0–0 ♙d6

Diagram 65



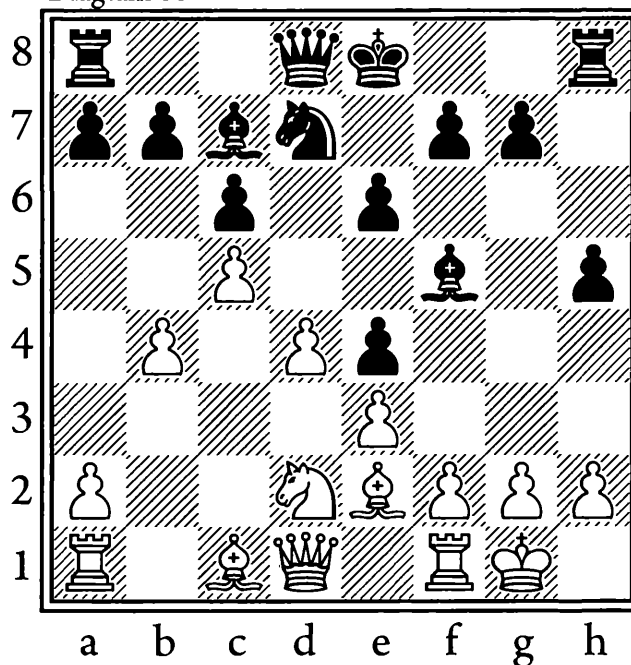
Advancing his pawns with 8.c5 ♙c7 9.b4, Kmochn began active operations on the wing. Alekhine astutely demonstrated that this offensive was positionally unjustified and premature.

9...♘e4!

We already know that a blow in the centre is the best reaction to a flank attack. This move is stronger than 9...e5, since after the pawn exchange on the e5-square a white knight would obtain a fine post on d4.

10.♘xe4 dxe4! 11.♘d2 h5!

Diagram 66



Suddenly the roles are reversed! Now it is Black who has gone over to a flank attack. But what a stark contrast there is between *this* flank operation and White's corresponding actions! Black's offensive has an excellent positional grounding: he possesses a central outpost which deprives his opponent of any counterstrokes.

12.f4

There was a potential threat of ♙xh2† and ♖h4†, with ♘d7-f6-g4 to follow.

12...g5! 13.g3?

The best defence against the flank attack consisted in bringing the knight to the centre at once, although even then, after 13.♘c4! ♘f6 14.♘e5! gxf4 15.exf4 a6, Alekhine points out that Black's game would be preferable thanks to the weakness of White's d-pawn. After the move played, White's situation is hopeless.

13...♘f6!

Threatening h5-h4. Black answers 14.fxg5 with 14...♘g4!.

14.♙b2 gxf4 15.exf4 h4! 16.♖b3 hxg3 17.hxg3 ♘d5!

From the centre the knight contributes to the attack in the most effective way.

18.♘c4 ♘xf4! 19.♙ae1 ♖g5 20.d5 ♘d3! White resigned.

The whole attack was conducted with pure Alekhinian energy.

In this game we could follow two things at once:

- (1) We saw how an unfounded flank attack is refuted by a blow in the centre.
- (2) We saw how dangerous a flank attack is when the centre is strong.

A number of examples have shown that when conducting an opening attack on the flank, the attacking side's king will often remain in the centre. This is basically prompted by the following considerations:

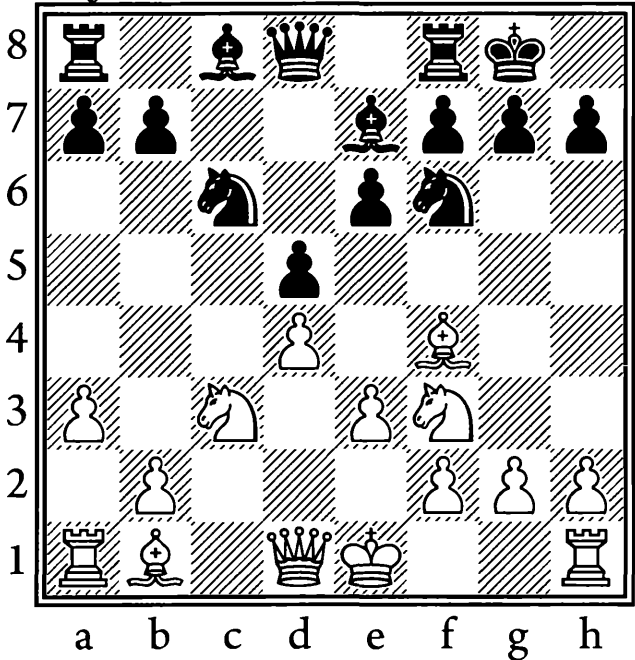
- (1) Castling on the same side where your own attack is under way may hamper its successful progress.
- (2) Castling on the opposite side may present the opponent with the target for a dangerous counter-attack, and in any case involves a loss of time.
- (3) Therefore, as long as the opponent cannot break through in the centre, the king's starting square is quite often the safest place for it.

I. Lipnitsky - V. Smyslov

Moscow 1950

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 c6 4.cxd5 cxd5 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙f4 e6 7.e3 ♙e7 8.♙d3 ♘b4 9.♙b1 0-0 10.a3 ♘c6

Diagram 67



Utilizing the solidity of his central positions, White starts an attack on his opponent's kingside at once.

11.♙d3 ♙d7

As is well known, counter-attack is often the best defence. At this point 11...♘a5! seems to me to be stronger, threatening 12...♘b3 followed by 13...♘c1. In reply, 12.b4 ♘b3 13.♘xd5 ♙xd5 14.♙a2 is no good in view of 14...♘c1! and Black wins.

White could prevent the black knight's intrusion on b3 by means of 12.♘d2, but this would deflect his own knight from the kingside where it is very much needed for the attack. In the event of 12.♙c2, Black could develop counter-play by 12...♘c4 13.♙b1 ♙a5.

Now, however, White's attack becomes very dangerous.

12.h4

In many variations Black could defend with g7-g6. But then h4-h5 would enable White to open up the h-file and plan various combinations involving sacrificing on the g6-square. In the plan of attack that White has conceived, his king is obviously best placed in the centre.

12...♙b6

A highly critical juncture! Black proceeds to counter-attack on the queenside. He aims to answer the tempting 13.♘g5 with 13...♙xb2 14.♘xh7 ♘e4! 15.♘xf8 ♙xf8 and wins. Against 13.♙g5, he has the very good 13...♘e4! 14.♘xe4 dxe4 15.♙xe4 f5 16.♙c2 ♙ac8 etc.

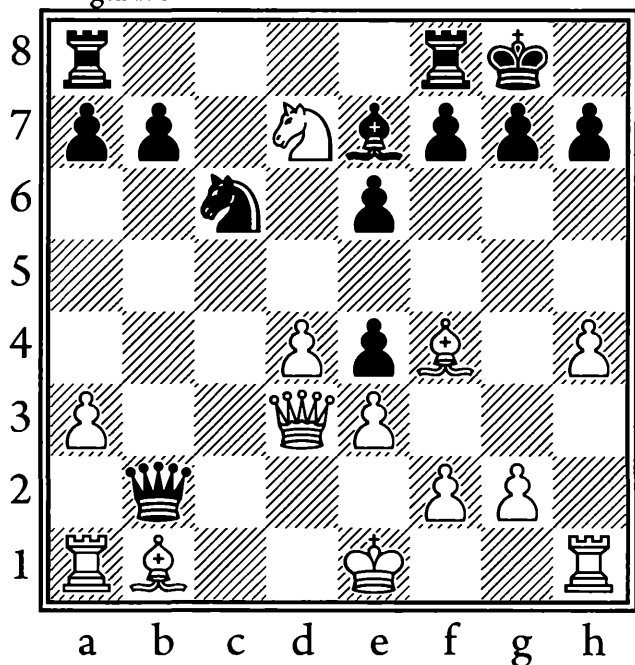
13.♘e5!

The knight joins in the attack and frees the f-pawn (in a number of lines ♘f6-e4 would be unpleasant for White). At the same time White sets a highly involved trap.

At first sight it would appear that White considers 13...♙xb2 to be unplayable on account

of 14. ♖xd7, when he is a piece up and threatens mate with 15. ♖xf6†. Against 14. ♖xd7 Black might, however, find the reply 14... ♖e4! 15. ♖xe4 dxe4

Diagram 68



16. ♖xe4 g6!!, winning back his material.

On seeing this, Black might suppose that his opponent had miscalculated and play 13... ♖xb2 in consequence. However, it is precisely this line that contains the trap. In the diagram position White's intention was not 16. ♖xe4 but the intermediate move 16. ♖a2!!. The idea is to draw the black queen onto a square where it is attacked by the bishop: it is only after 16... ♖xa2 that White plays 17. ♖xe4, threatening mate and the queen. The only reply is 17... f5; then after 18. ♖xa2 fxe4 19. ♖xe6† White emerges with an extra pawn.

Black could meet 16. ♖a2!! with 16... ♖b4†!, but this does not help either: 17. ♖d1! (White would lose after 17. axb4 ♖xb4† 18. ♖d2 ♖xb1†, or 17. ♖f1 ♖c1†) 17... ♖xa2 18. ♖xa2 (now 18. ♖xe4 fails to 18... ♖d2 mate – the point of 16... ♖b4†!) 18... exd3 19. axb4 ♖fd8 20. ♖c5 ♖xb4 21. ♖b1 with winning chances for White.

13... ♖fd8!

Detecting his opponent's idea, Black renews the threat to capture on b2.

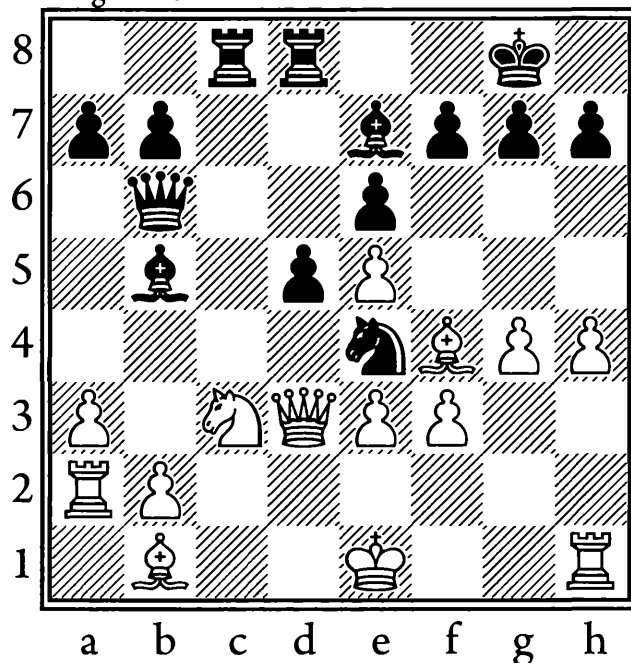
14. ♖a2!

This "unsightly" move parries the opponent's attack on the queenside. Anything else would be worse, for instance 14. b4 a5 15. b5 ♖a7 16. a4 ♖b4 threatening ... ♖ac8. The knight on a7 could later be transferred via b8 to d6.

14... ♖f8

Black hastens to remove his king from the danger zone, evidently thinking it would be unrealistic to carry on with his queenside counter-attack. But he is wrong! He could still think about mobilizing his rook on the c-file. For example: 14... ♖ac8! 15. g4 ♖xe5! 16. dxe5 ♖e4! 17. f3 ♖b5!!

Diagram 69



18. ♖c2 ♖a4!! 19. ♖d3 ♖b5!! With a wholly unusual repetition of moves, since it is no good for White to move off the b1-h7 diagonal or take the black bishop.

After 14... ♖ac8! White would have more difficulty pursuing his attack, seeing that Black could meet 15. f3 with 15... ♖a5! threatening 16... ♖b3! or 16... ♖b5!.

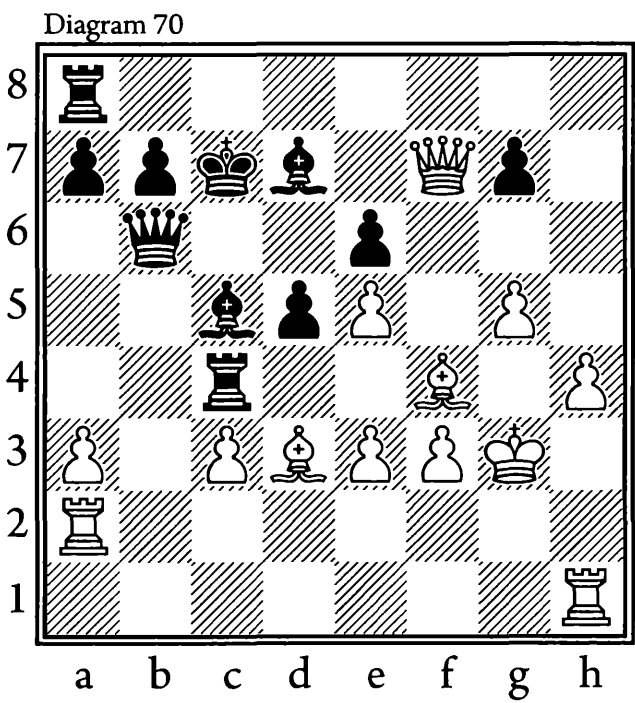
So in this case too, counter-attack would have

been the best defence. The loss of one tempo (14...♔f8) puts Black in a difficult situation.

15.g4 ♖xe5 16.dxe5 ♖e4 17.f3 ♖xc3

Alas, the move 17...♗b5 is unavailable.

**18.♔xh7 ♔e8 19.bxc3 ♜dc8 20.♔f2 ♗f8
21.g5 ♜c4 22.♔g3 ♔d8 23.♔g8 ♔c7
24.♔xf7 ♗c5 25.♗d3!**



By sacrificing a pawn, White seizes the c-file to which the black king has removed itself.

25...♜xc3 26.♜b1 ♜b3

Or 26...♔a5 27.♗b5 ♜d8 28.♗xd7 ♜xd7
29.♜xb7†! etc.

27.♜c1 ♔a5

27...♜xd3 28.♜ac2 etc. is even worse.

28.♜ac2 ♔b6 29.♔e7! ♜xd3 30.♜xc5†

And White won.

It should be pointed out that in the foregoing examples the flank attack did not result from any specially designed arrangement of the forces in the opening. It arose as the most active response to the opponent's positional errors.

At the same time, there *are* a number of opening schemes where the initial mobilization of forces is already geared to preparation for a flank attack. This applies to many variations of the Sicilian Defence and Ruy Lopez, in which White strives to attack on the kingside and Black on the queenside (irrespective, in the former opening, of where the white king has castled).

In contradistinction to this, there is for example the Carlsbad Variation of the Queen's Gambit, characterized by White's offensive on the queenside and Black's on the kingside. And finally, in such openings as the King's Indian Defence or the Caro-Kann, both sides may take their turns to attack on either flank.

The general strategic factors in these opening attacks are no different from those we have already seen. The most important of them is that *the success of a flank attack depends to a decisive extent on the situation in the centre.*

Chapter 4

Conquering the Centre from the Flanks

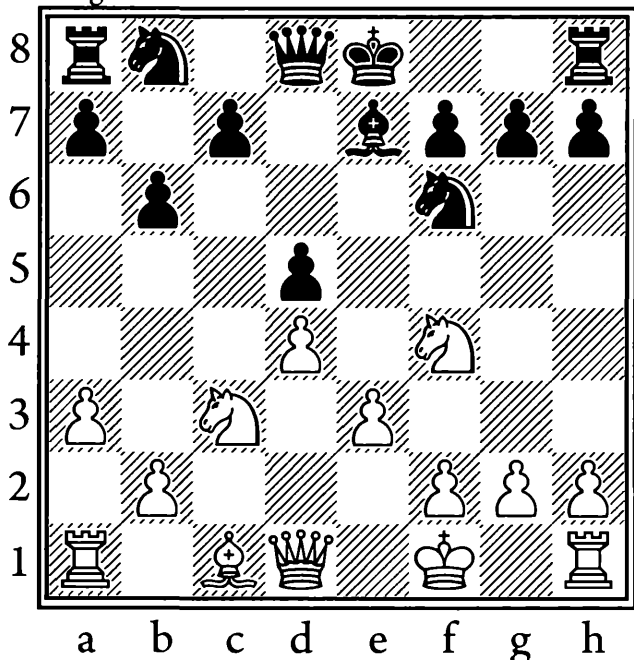
With a blow in the centre you easily succeed in thwarting your opponent's attack on the flank – this much is generally familiar. The mutual interdependence between the centre and the flanks has, however, remained unilluminated up to now. And yet an early attack on the flank is not always or usually an operation of purely local significance; it is rather a veiled form of attack against the centre of the enemy position.

M. Botvinnik – V. Smyslov

Match (2nd game), Moscow 1954

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 b6
5.♘ge2 ♙a6 6.a3 ♙e7 7.♘f4 d5 8.cxd5
♙xf1 9.♔xf1 exd5

Diagram 71



The World Champion now employed an unexpected attacking manoeuvre on the wing:

10.g4!

The main point of this move is to seize the centre by means of an attack from the flank. White's idea triumphed completely after:

10...c6 11.g5 ♘fd7 12.h4 ♙d6 13.e4!

This important move is possible since White drove the knight from f6.

13...dxe4 14.♘xe4 ♙xf4 15.♙xf4

White's advantage consists in his huge central preponderance. But he achieved this by a particular method – from the flank to the centre.

15...0–0 16.h5!

Now White's attack has switched right over to the flank. But its success is due in no small part to being actively supported from the centre.

**16...♖e8 17.♘d6 ♖e6 18.d5 ♖xd6
19.♙xd6 ♔xg5 20.♔f3**

White won in a further 10 moves.

In this game we can identify three stages:

- (1) a flank operation with the aim of attacking the centre;
- (2) seizure of the centre – and, supported by this,

(3) a further offensive on the flank.

Black's best reply to 10.g4! was probably the straightforward antidote 10...g5.

Now another example, based on the same idea.

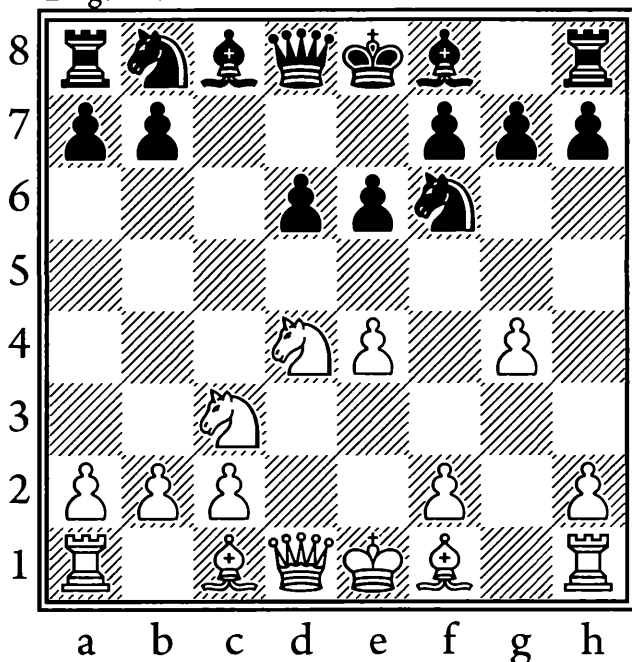
I. Lipnitsky – S. Kotlerman

Kiev 1950

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 e6 6.g4!

Played in order to seize the centre.

Diagram 72



6...♘c6

A blow in the centre with 6...d5 (aimed at spoiling White's flank attack) would not achieve its aim in view of 7.exd5 ♘xd5 (or 7...exd5 8.♖e2† ♖e7 9.♖xe7† ♙xe7 10.g5 and 11.♘xd5) 8.♙b5† ♙d7 9.♘xd5 exd5 10.♖e2† ♖e7 (10...♙e7 11.♘f5) 11.♙e3 and 12.0–0–0, with strong pressure on the centre files.

In Pachman – Kan (Moscow 1946), the attempt to forestall g4-g5 with 6...h6 gave White the advantage after 7.♙g2 d5 8.exd5 ♘xd5 9.♘xd5 exd5 10.0–0.

7.g5 ♘d7 8.♙e3 ♙e7 9.h4 a6 10.♖d2

White has gained an advantage in the centre which will be increased still further after 0–0–0 and f2-f4. Of course he may later continue with his flank offensive, but by then it will have the support of most of his forces.

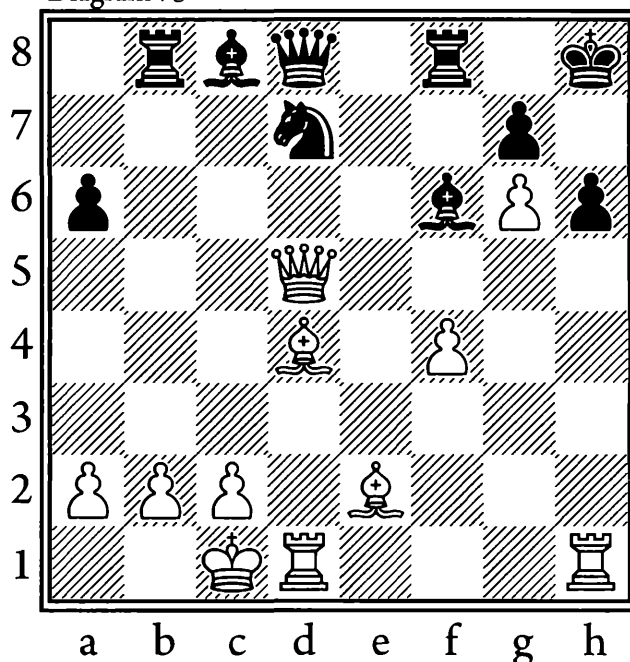
10...♘de5 11.♙e2 0–0 12.♘xc6 bxc6

Or 12...♘xc6 13.h5 b5 14.g6 fxg6 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.0–0–0 b4 17.♘d5! with a strong attack.

13.f4 ♘d7 14.h5 ♖b8 15.0–0–0 d5 16.g6 ♖a5

Or 16...fxg6 17.hxg6 h6 18.exd5 cxd5 19.♘xd5! exd5 20.♖xd5† ♔h8 21.♙d4 ♙f6, and now:

Diagram 73



22.♖xh6†! gxh6 23.♖h1 ♘e5! (or 23...♔g7 24.♖xh6† ♔g7 25.♖h7† ♔xg6 26.♖h1!! and wins.

17.gxh7† ♔h8 18.♖dg1 ♖b4 19.b3 dxe4 20.♙d4 e5 21.fxe5 c5 22.♙c4! ♖d8 (22...cxd4 23.♖g2) 23.♖xg7! cxd4

Or 23...♔xg7 24.♖g2†, and wherever the king goes, White plays 25.♖g1.

24.♖hg1 ♙f8 25.♖h6

And White won.

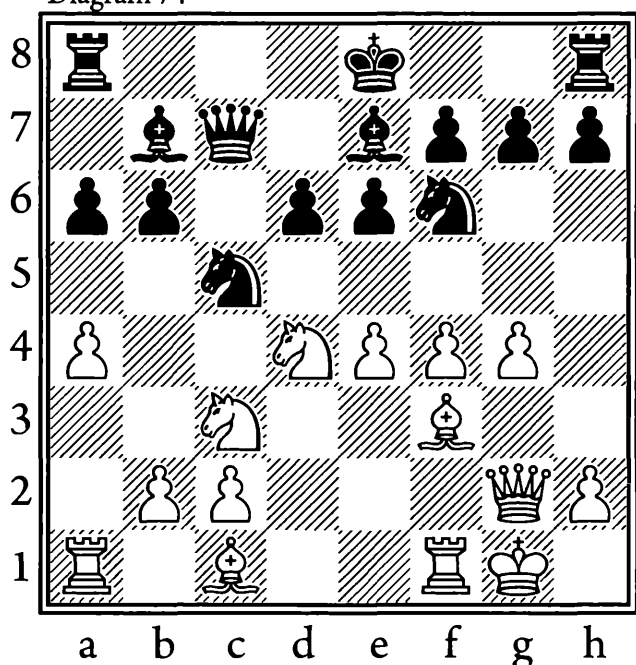
In the following game there is a most instructive manoeuvre by which White gains the advantage using the same method of action – from the flank to the centre.

N. Kopaev – V. Alatortsev

Leningrad 1938

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 cxd4
5.♘xd4 a6 6.♙e2 e6 7.0–0 ♚c7 8.a4
b6 9.f4 ♘bd7 10.♙f3 ♙b7 11.g4! ♘c5
12.♚e2 ♙e7 13.♚g2!

Diagram 74



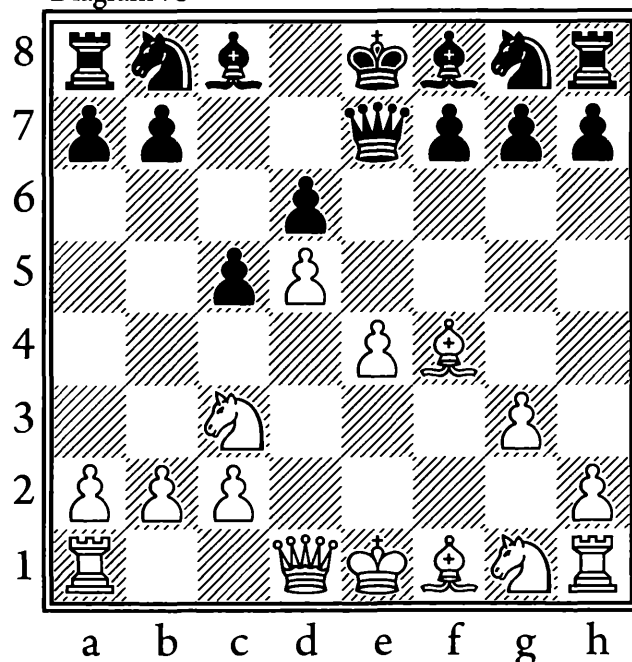
Having securely prevented the blow in the centre with d6-d5, which is typical of this variation, White afterwards conducted his flank attack to victory.

E. Bogoljubow – A. Alekhine

Match (9th game), Germany 1934

1.d4 c5 2.d5 e5 3.e4 d6 4.f4 exf4 5.♙xf4
♚h4† 6.g3 ♚e7 7.♘c3

Diagram 75



7...g5!

With this move, striking a blow on the flank, Alekhine gains control of the central dark squares.

8.♙e3 ♘d7 9.♘f3 h6 10.♚d2

“Aimless would have been instead 10.♘b5 ♘d8! etc.” (Alekhine)

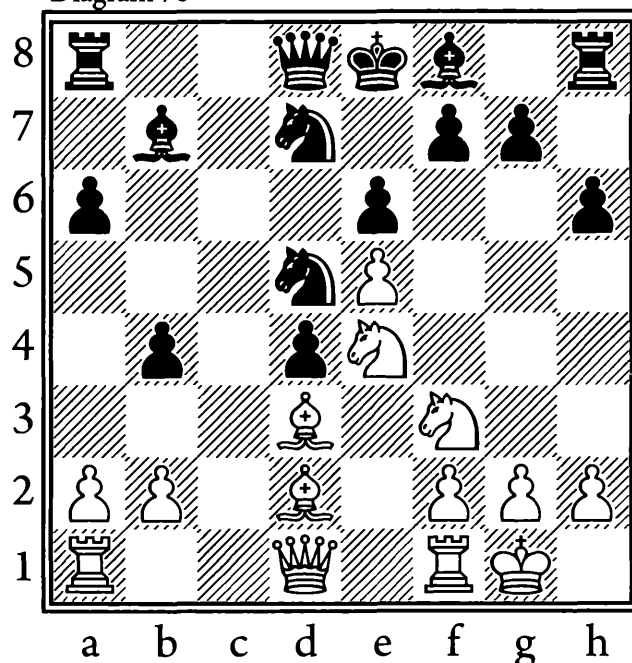
10...♘gf6 11.0–0–0 ♘g4 12.♙e2 ♙g7
13.♙hf1 ♘xe3 14.♚xe3 a6

Black has a clear preponderance in the centre.

V. Chekhover – V. Pirc

Moscow 1935

Diagram 76



White's position in the centre looks fairly solid, with his pawn on e5, his knights on e4 and f3 and his bishop on d3. Indeed it is not easy for Black to attack his opponent's central stronghold from the front, head-on. But as we know already, there is such a thing as a turning manoeuvre from the flank, and this is what Black resorts to. There followed:

15...g5! 16.♘xd4

White hastens to take off this pawn before the black queen defends it from b6. For instance after 16.♞e1 ♜b6, there is a dangerous threat of g5-g4.

16...♗xe5

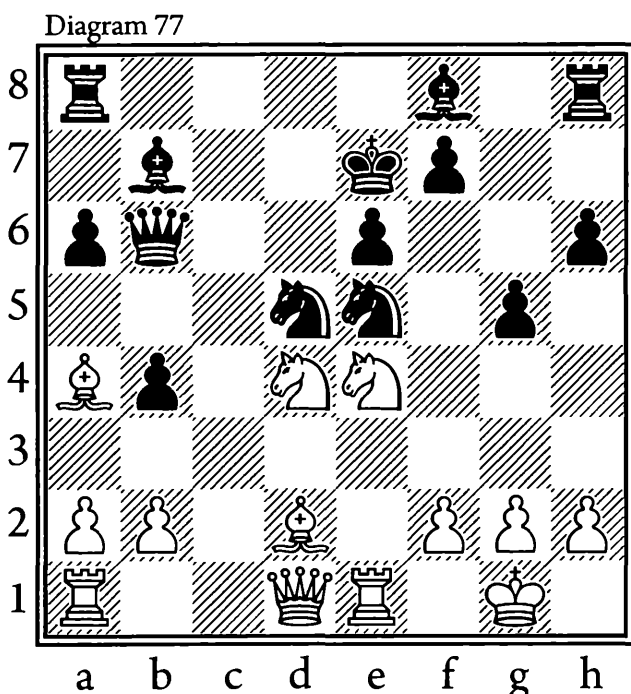
A rare spectacle: all four central squares are occupied by the "cavalry". But while Black's knights are quite firmly established, White's are unable to maintain their positions.

17.♙c2 ♞b6!

White has no way to exploit the kingside weaknesses resulting from g7-g5, since his own knight is *en prise*.

18.♙a4† ♔e7 19.♞e1

White does not want to retreat from the centre without a fight; he is defending his knight on d4 indirectly.



A most intriguing position. White's king is sheltered on the flank, Black's is in the centre. White has five pieces in play, Black has four. Despite this, White's position is very difficult.

19...♙g7!

Except for the rooks, all Black's forces are exerting immense pressure on the centre and pushing the enemy pieces back from it. In the first place, the threat is 20...♞xd4! 21.♙xg5† hxg5 22.♞xd4 ♗f3† and 23...♙xd4. For instance if 20.♗g3, then 20...♞xd4 21.♗f5† (or 21.♙xg5† ♔f8!, but not 21...hxg5 22.♗f5†!) 21...exf5 22.♙xg5† ♔f8! 23.♞xd4 ♗f3† etc.

20.♗c2 ♗d3!

The invasion begins!

21.♙e3

Or 21.♙xg5† hxg5 22.♞xd3 ♙e5! 23.♗g3 ♞xh2! 24.♞xe5 (24.♔xh2 ♞xf2! 25.♞xe5 ♞h8†) 24...♞xg2† and White is crushed.

21...♗xe3 22.♞xd3 ♗d5 23.♗e3 ♞hd8 24.♗f5† ♔f8 25.♗xg7 ♔xg7 26.♞g3 ♗f4!

White resigned 12 moves later.

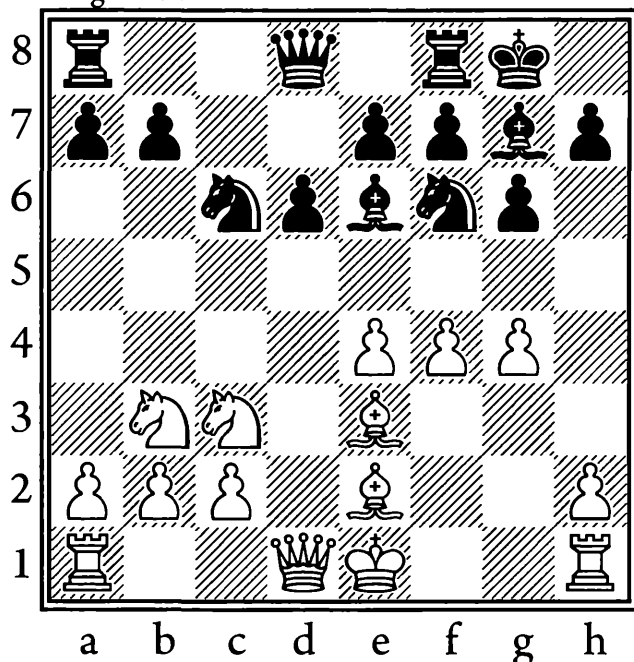
In conclusion, I would like to call the reader's attention to an example which brings out with particular vividness the very close inherent interconnection between the centre and the flank.

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.♙e3

In the variation 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.♗b3 0-0 9.f4, Black has a strong flanking blow against White's centre in the shape of 9...b5! (placing this pawn under a twofold attack); for example 10.♙xb5 ♗xe4! 11.♙xc6 ♞b6† etc.

7...♗c6 8.♗b3 0-0 9.f4 ♙e6 10.g4!

Diagram 78



This move was suggested by the Moscow First-Category player P. Rabinovich, and was first introduced into practice by Botvinnik in his games with Kan and Levenfish (3rd Moscow international tournament, 1936). Leaving his king in the centre, White commences a flank attack.

To thwart this attack, Black strikes a powerful blow in the centre:

10...d5!

Instead 10...♘a5 would be weaker on account of 11.g5; but now Black is ready to meet 11.g5 with 11...♞xe4, and 11.e5 with 11...d4! 12.exf6 ♕xf6! etc.

However, White replies with:

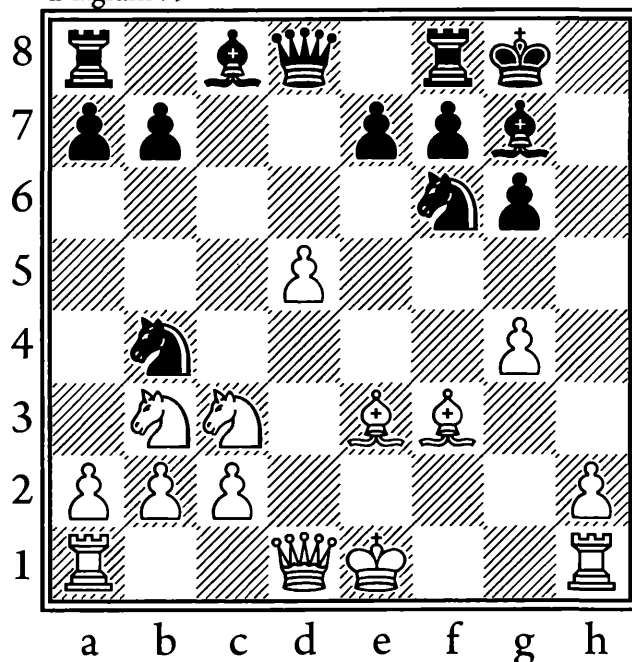
11.f5!

The struggle between the flank and the centre continues. The aim of this move is quite familiar to us by now: to win the fight for the centre by means of an attack from the flank.

11...♔c8 12.exd5 ♘b4 13.fxg6 hxg6
14.♔f3

It looks as if White has been successful – the centre is conquered. If he manages to follow this up with a2-a3, ♖d1-d2 and 0-0-0, Black will be left in a difficult position. What is Black to do now?

Diagram 79



14... xg4

Suddenly the roles are reversed! Now it is Black, operating from the flank, who is attacking the centre that White has seized.

15.♔xg4 ♕xg4 16.♔xg4 ♕xc3† 17.bxc3
♖xc2† 18.♔f2 ♖xa1 19.♖xa1 ♔xd5

Black liquidates his opponent's centre while preserving the material balance.

But even this is not the end of the matter...

20. ♖d4!

White brings his bishop to the centre with the threat of a new attack on the flank. Black starts to experience difficulties.

In this opening line some new continuations have already been discovered. For instance, a very interesting reply to 11.f5 is 11...gxf5!?.

In this example we could watch the following events:

(1) White started a dangerous attack on the flank (10.g4), in the hope of first seizing the centre and then, with support from there, continuing the attack directly against the king.

(2) Black dealt a vigorous counter-blow in the centre (10...d5!) in order to frustrate these intentions.

(3) White seized a base in the centre by means of an attack from the flank (11.f5!).

(4) Using exactly the same recipe, Black regained his central position.

(5) Centralizing his bishop, White continues the flank attack.

So we have been able to verify that *flank attacks in the opening are an important supplementary method in the struggle for the centre, consisting in the renunciation of a frontal attack in favour of flanking blows and enveloping movements*. It remains to note that this method chiefly finds its use in positions of an open or semi-open character.

There is no doubt that early flank attacks as a means of fighting for the centre have a great future.

Chapter 5

Mobilizing the Pieces

Before the start of the chess battle, the opponents possess armies completely identical in strength, initially positioned way back in the rear. From the very first move, the hostilities are opened. From then on, both sides strive to mobilize the pieces from their starting squares as fast as possible. Whoever brings his forces into the fray more quickly and expediently can count on seizing favourable posts in the centre and holding the initiative.

But how are your pieces to be mobilized within the tightest schedule? There can only be one answer: by spending time or *tempi* in the most strictly economical way. Each move must pursue the aim of developing the pieces or fighting for the centre. A move that fulfils both these tasks is especially valuable.

There exist a number of precepts for the way to mobilize your forces in the minimum time. Let's recall some of them.

(1) Don't move the same piece twice in the opening, but use the time to mobilize a different piece.

(2) Don't waste time on useless moves with the rook's pawns.

(3) Don't bring your queen out prematurely; then your opponent won't be able to mobilize his forces with tempo by attacking it.

(4) Don't undertake any hasty unprepared attacks with one or two pieces, since your opponent will easily repel them at the same time as continuing to mobilize his own forces; you will risk falling hopelessly behind in development. The reader will appreciate the significance of these precepts more correctly when he has studied the material which follows.

Grandmaster Nimzowitsch, speaking of an advantage in development as an ideal, offers this graphic comparison:

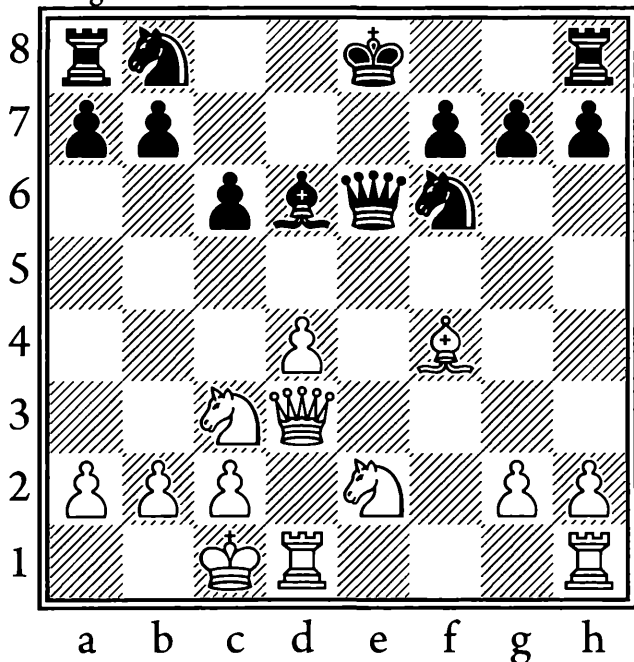
"While running a race it would be inopportune, to say the least, if you wasted even a moment of your precious time in satisfying (say) an 'unaccountable' urge to 'mark time for a while'; this would give quite an advantage to your opponent. In chess, repeatedly moving one and the same piece amounts to 'marking time' like that."

If a player violates the principle of developing his pieces as quickly as possible, it often costs him quite dearly. I will now give a few examples.

A. Tolush – V. Alatortsev

Moscow 1948

Diagram 80



Both sides have equal material, but one is struck by the substantial difference in the placing of their forces.

White's entire army is fully mobilized, in action, and ready to fall upon the opponent at once. Black has only half his army engaged on the battlefield; the rest of it is still far back in the rear. So despite the overall material balance, in effect White has twice as many forces at his disposal in the combat zone. Black's troubles are aggravated still further by the insecure placing of his king, and – most importantly – by the openness of the position.

How did White achieve a won position in the very opening? We can best answer this by looking at the game itself.

1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 ♚xd5?

By bringing his queen out early, Black allows White to gain an important tempo. As is well known, the idea of the counter-gambit that Black has chosen lies in 3...e4!.

4.♘c3!

Of course White makes use of the opportunity.

4...♚e6 5.fxe5!

Drawing the black queen onto e5, so as to gain further tempi presently.

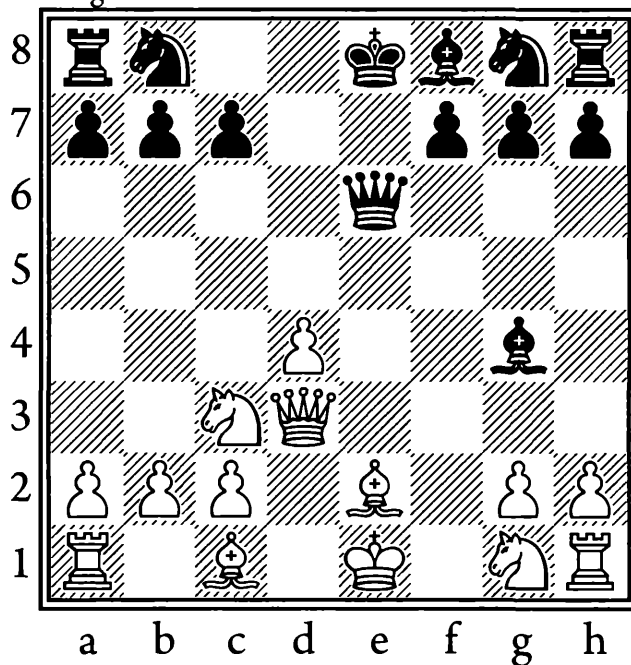
5...♚xe5† 6.♙e2 ♘g4

Stopping White from developing with tempo by ♘g1-f3, but White gains the tempo in another manner.

7.d4! ♚e6 8.♚d3

In order to start the attack as quickly as possible, White hastens to develop his queenside and intends to castle long.

Diagram 81



8...c6?

As a consequence of his mistaken 3...♚xd5?, Black is behind with his mobilization; he has had to make four moves with his queen. He ought to be developing his pieces all the faster at this stage, while there are still no immediate threats hanging over them. He should have continued 8...♘f6!, and if 9.♚b5† then 9...♚c6. Nor is 9.♙f4 dangerous, in view of 9...♙d6! 10.♚b5† ♘bd7! and Black quickly develops.

After 8...♘f6! White would still have the advantage of superior development, but it would not be decisive.

9.♙f4 ♘f6 10.0-0-0 ♙xe2

Aiding the further deployment of White's pieces, but then Black's position was already difficult.

11.♘gxe2 ♙d6

Reaching the position on our first diagram. One more move, and Black could evacuate his king. But it's too late!

12.d5!

Opening up new lines, White goes over to the decisive attack. If now 12...♙d7, the win is very pretty: 13.♙xd6 ♙xd6 14.dxc6! ♙xd3 15.cxb7!!, and the white pawn queens on a8. What Black played was no help either:

12...♘xd5

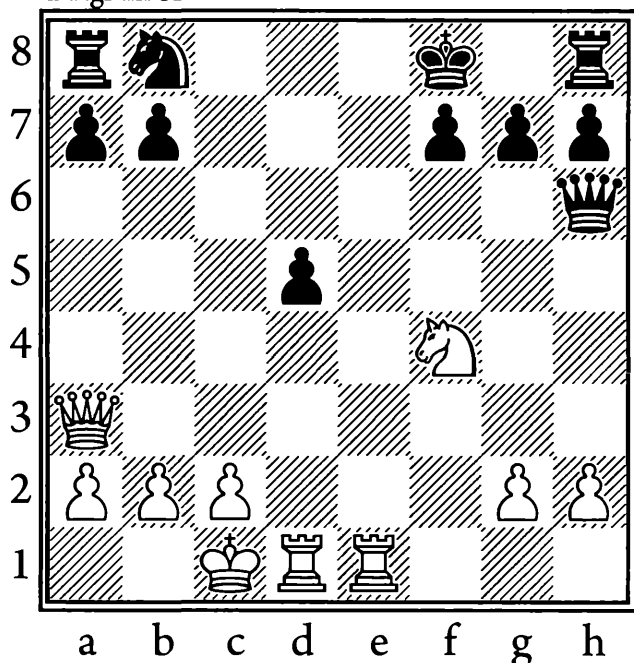
Or 12...cxd5 13.♘b5! ♙xf4† 14.♘xf4 ♙c6 15.♖he1† etc.

13.♘xd5 cxd5 14.♙g3!

White takes over the e-file with tempo.

14...♙xf4† 15.♘xf4 ♙h6 16.♖he1† ♔f8 17.♙a3†

Diagram 82



Black resigned.

The concluding part of the game is highly instructive, as it most vividly shows what is actually meant by the advantage of superior mobilization. White demonstrated the simplest method of achieving victory: in a short but bloody skirmish (moves 12-15) he eliminated his opponent's only two developed minor pieces, after which his own remaining forces easily rounded up the defenceless black king.

Two rooks and a knight on the black side made no moves at all and filled the role of extras throughout. The reason for such a swift defeat in this game is obvious: Black transgressed against the principle of mobilizing the forces as rapidly as possible (repeated moves with the queen; afterwards, 8...c6?).

Now for another case of the wasteful management of tempi.

After the moves **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♙g5 h6**, White played **6.♙f4?**. In some opening variations, such bishop manoeuvres do take place – prompted by specific considerations, one player will forfeit a tempo. For instance in the Nimzo-Indian Defence, after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 d5 5.a3, as an alternative to 5...♙xc3† Black may play 5...♙e7. By playing ♙f8-b4-e7 instead of ♙f8-e7, he is effectively consenting to a loss of tempo (since a2-a3 is a useful move for White).

How is this sequence of moves to be explained? The point is that Black has chosen the Nimzo-Indian because he does not want to play a normal Queen's Gambit with the white bishop developed on g5. But after 4.e3 he has no objection to reverting to the channels of the regular Queen's Gambit even with the loss of tempo, since his opponent's bishop on c1 is now shut in.

By contrast, it would be wholly absurd to play

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟c3 ♜b4 4.a3 ♜e7??, since in this case the loss of tempo would not only lack any justification; it would actually allow White to gain a big advantage with 5.e4!.

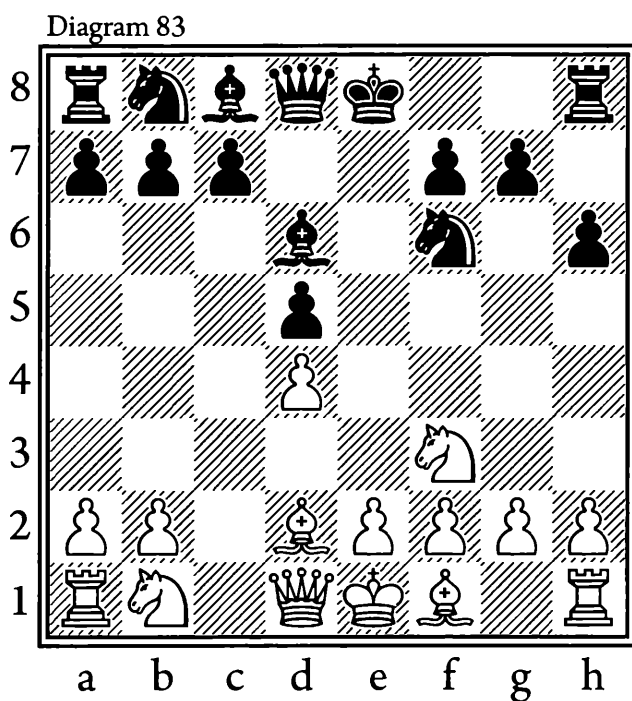
A similarly unjustified loss of tempo occurs with 6.♜f4? in the present game. Instead of this, White should have exchanged on f6 and continued with his development.

6...♜b4† 7.♜d2??

It was essential to develop a piece without delay, for instance with 7.♟c3, but White is afraid of phantoms.

7...♜d6!

Why is it that the repeated moves of the white bishop are given question marks while an analogous manoeuvre by Black earns an exclamation mark? To answer this, consider the diagram position.



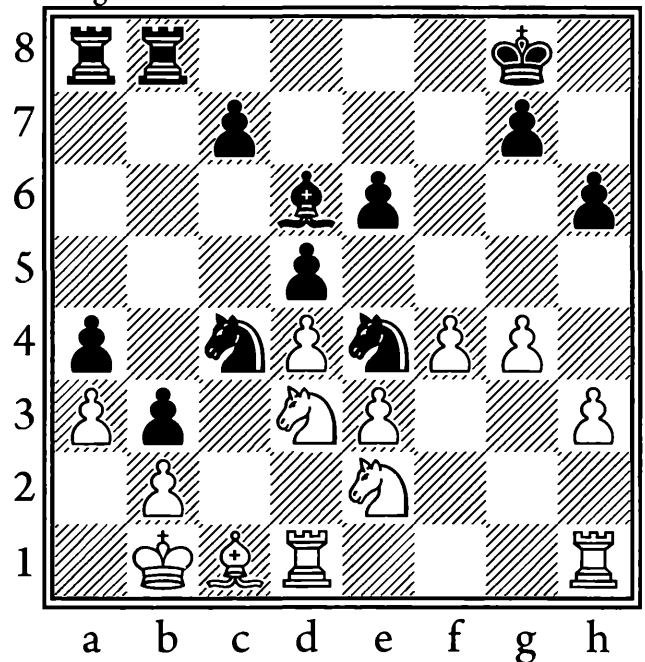
The last three moves have been spent by White on the useless manoeuvre ♜c1-g5-f4-d2, after which his bishop is occupying a most unattractive position. Black has spent the same time playing h7-h6 and ♜f8-b4-d6, as a result of which *his* bishop has occupied the fine post of d6 and his pawn on h6 is guarding the knight on f6 against a pin.

By contrast with the Tolush – Alatortsev game, both sides here have mobilized the same number of pieces. Yet *the quality of this mobilization is unequal*. The upshot of White's planless, ill-considered play is that after seven moves, Black is left with the advantage.

In the game, there followed:

8.g3 ♟c6 9.♜g2 ♜g4 10.e3 ♞d7 11.♟c3 ♜h3 12.♜xh3 ♞xh3 13.♞e2 a6 14.0-0-0 ♞e6 15.♟e1 b5 16.♞f3 b4 17.♟e2 ♟a5 18.♟d3 ♟c4 19.♞b1 a5 20.♜c1 ♟e4 21.h3 0-0 22.g4 a4 23.♞f5 b3 24.♞xe6 fxe6 25.f4 ♞fb8 26.a3

Diagram 84



26...♜xa3! 27.bxa3 b2 28.♜xb2 ♞xb2† 29.♟xb2 ♞b8 30.♞a1 ♞xb2 31.♟c1 ♟c3

And one move before being mated, White resigned.

Neglect of the principle of developing the pieces quickly and effectively has resulted in defeat or led to difficult positions in a great many games. These must be set against other cases in which an offence against the principle of speedy mobilization did *not* have adverse consequences.

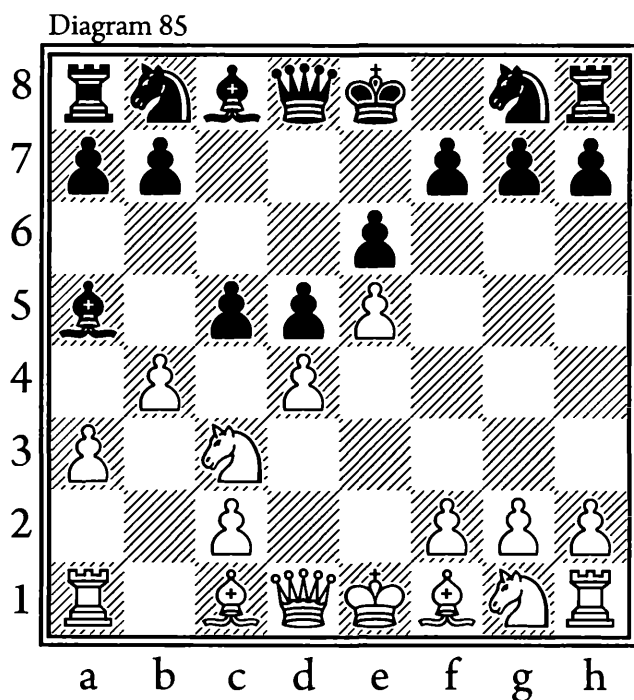
V. Smyslov – M. Botvinnik

Moscow (9) 1954

In the first World Championship match between these two rivals, the following variation of the French Defence occurred three times:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♙a5 6.b4!

Development has only just begun – the players have brought out one piece each. But this does not stop White from using an aggressive stratagem straight away. The move 6.b4!, recommended by Alekhine as far back as 1924, intensifies the struggle at once.



Botvinnik replied **6...cxd4**, not wishing to incur the dangers of the variation 6...cxb4 7.♘b5 bxa3† 8.c3 ♙c7 9.♙xa3.

In two of the match games, after 7.♘b5 ♙c7 8. f4 ♘e7 9.♘f3 and ♘b5xd4, White secured the advantageous central square d4 for his knight. Note the method: from the flank to the centre.

In the 9th match game, instead of 7.♘b5, White came up with a new attacking blow, this time on the other side of the board:

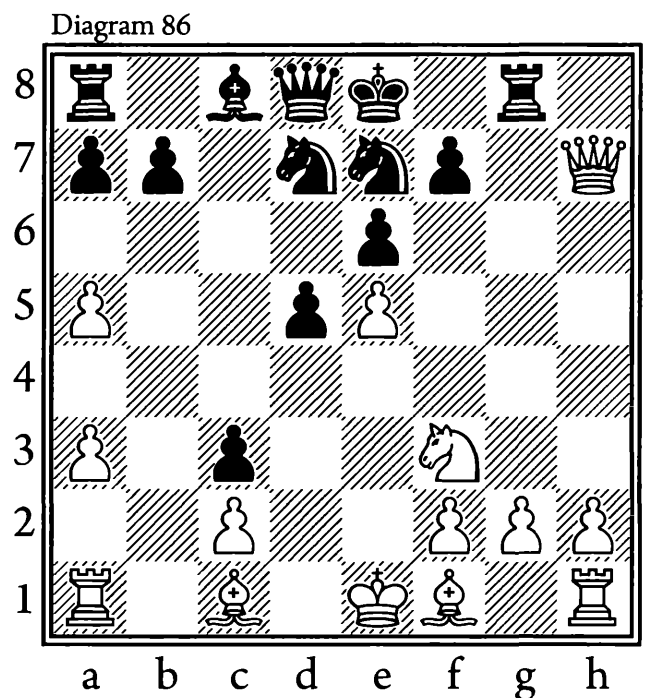
7.♙g4!

The point of this move is to organize an immediate offensive against the wing weakened by the absence of the dark-squared bishop.

The reply 7...g6 would leave the dark squares incurably weak. In the event of 7...♙f8 8.bxa5 dxc3, White could obtain a powerful attack by 9.a4 ♘c6 10.♙a3†, or by 9.h4 with ♖h1-h3-g3 to follow.

Botvinnik replied 7...♘e7!, and play proceeded:

8.bxa5 dxc3 9.♙xg7 ♖g8 10.♙xh7 ♘d7 11.♘f3



A highly complex situation. White has various threats at his disposal – attacking against the king, and advancing his h-pawn to queen. Black has counterplay in the centre and on the queenside. At this point Bronstein recommends 11...♙c7, and if 12.♙f4 then 12...♘f8 followed by ♘f8-g6.

In this game White went into the attack “from the word go” with nothing but his queen, ignoring the conventional rules about completing your development first. All the other pieces on both sides were brought into play as the battle unfolded. If White had refrained from the

aggressive ♖d1-g4, even for one move, then after 7...♘e7 it would no longer have been possible to demolish Black's kingside.

Obviously 7.♖g4!, which forms the basis of a well thought out attacking system, has nothing in common with those early unfounded queen sorties which are dictated by various premature considerations.

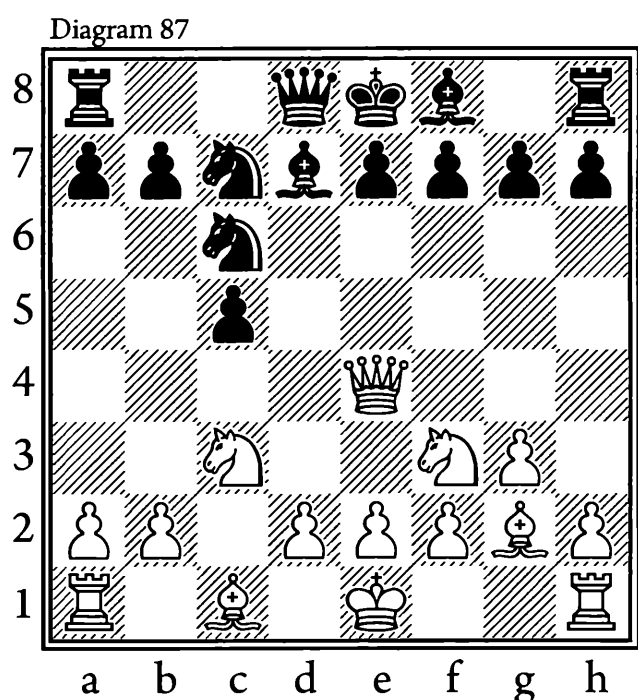
V. Korchnoi – S. Flohr

Kiev 1954

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c5 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5
♘xd5 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♙g2 ♘c7

Black aims to set up a piece-and-pawn centre of a type already familiar to us.

7.♙a4 ♙d7 8.♙e4



A most unusual queen manoeuvre! White commits a “cardinal sin” against two chess principles at once: he spends two tempi moving the same piece, and furthermore that piece is none other than the queen. In the opening the centre is supposed to be an unhealthy place for the queen, as the latter may suffer “humiliation” at the hands of the opponent's pieces and pawns. Korchnoi, however, is not troubled by such

purely dogmatic notions. Taking a thoroughly concrete view of the position, he has seen that centralizing the queen *is* playable, and he does not grudge two tempi to do it. He reckons that it won't be easy for his opponent to attack the queen, which is preventing e7-e5.

8...e6

Black carries on developing, perhaps on the assumption that White's manoeuvre will automatically prove to be bad.

9.0–0 ♙e7 10.d4!

White frees himself in the centre. He increases the pressure on the long diagonal and the c- and d-files.

10...cxd4 11.♘xd4 0–0 12.♖d1

And within a few moves it became clear that Black was most uncomfortably placed. Essentially White's advantage was secured by the manoeuvre ♖d1-a4-e4, to which Black did not find an adequate response.

An entirely analogous queen manoeuvre (with colours reversed) took place in the following game.

V. Makogonov – I. Lipnitsky

Leningrad 1953

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 c5 5.e3
♘c6 6.a3 ♘e4 7.♘xe4 dxe4 8.♘d2 cxd4
9.♘xe4

Black now has various possibilities, such as 9...c5 (to prevent b2-b4) or 9...e5, but he decided on the manoeuvre:

9...♙a5† 10.♙d2 ♙e5!

How can anyone state that bringing the queen out early is undesirable, without reference to the position? This is a case in point: from the very centre of the board, the queen is exerting highly unpleasant pressure on the

opponent. Black already threatens to win a pawn (d4xe3).

11. ♖c2 ♕e7

A tempting possibility was 11...f5 12. ♘g3 dxe3 13. fxe3 (13. ♕xe3 f4!) 13...♕c5 14. ♖d3 0–0 and 15...♖d8 with a big advantage to Black. However, this would be refuted by 12. ♘g5! dxe3 13. ♕xe3! f4 14. ♘f3! and then ♕e3–d2–c3, again with advantage – but this time for White.

With 11...♕e7, Black covers the g5-square and *does* now threaten f7–f5.

12. f4

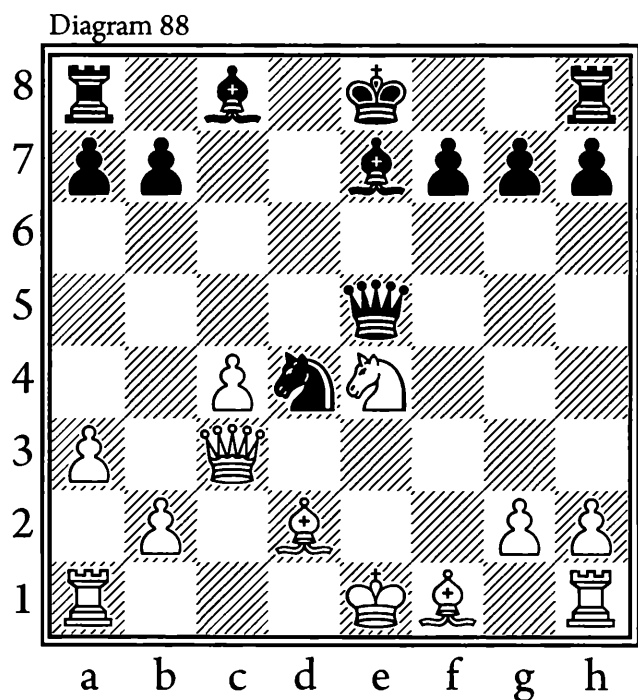
An eloquent admission that the queen on e5 is extremely troublesome for White.

12... ♖c7

Now a blow in the centre with e6–e5! is threatened.

13. exd4 ♘xd4 14. ♖c3 e5! 15. fxe5 ♖xe5

For the second time the black queen settles on e5, this time with decisive threats.



16. ♕e3

White had been pinning his hopes on this move – since if the knight retreats, the queens

will be exchanged, while if 16...♖xe4 then 17. ♖xd4. However, the centralized position of Black's pieces enables him to strike a deadly blow:

16... ♕h4†! 17. ♘f2

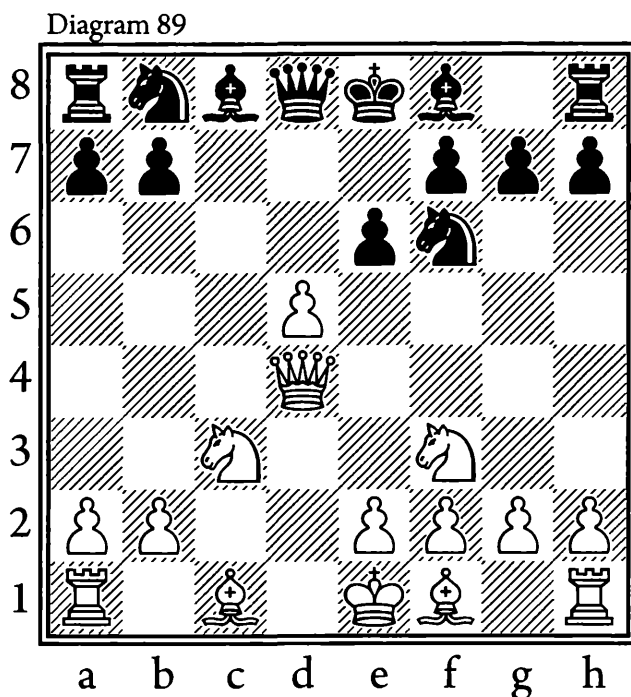
White also loses after 17. g3 ♖xe4 18. ♖xd4 ♖xh1 19. ♖xg7 ♖f8 20. gxh4 ♖e4!, or 17. ♔d2 0–0 18. ♕xd4 ♖d8 etc.

17... ♘c2†

White resigned, since a piece is lost (18. ♖xc2 ♖xe3† 19. ♖e2 ♕xf2†).

In the Zurich Candidates' Tournament (1953) the following variation occurred three times:

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 d5 4. ♘f3 c5 5. cxd5 cxd4 6. ♖xd4



Clearly if Geller, Stahlberg and Najdorf had adhered staunchly to the rule about the undesirability of bringing the queen out early, they would not have played this move in their games with Keres. Most likely they were guided by the concrete approach to the position: 6. ♘xd4 would be met by 6...♘xd5, when Black quickly equalizes.

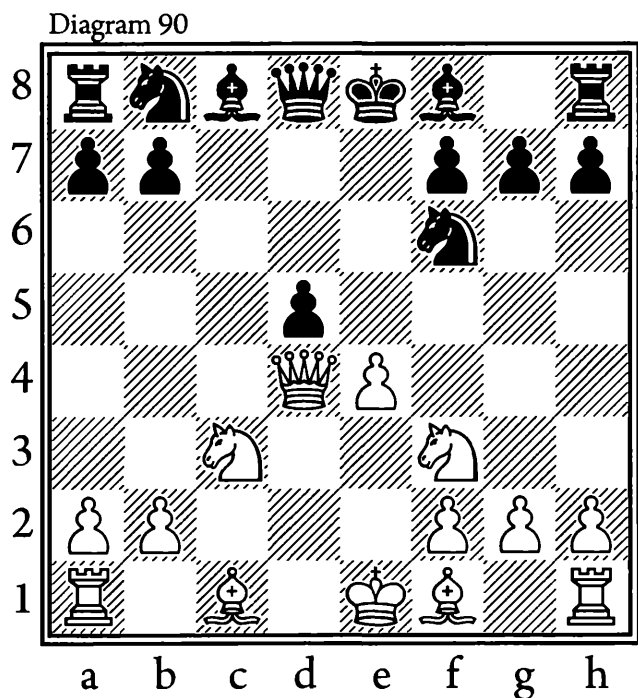
Again, 6. ♖xd4 is not some kind of extravagant adventure with the white queen. It is linked to

a definite system of play. Of the three games mentioned, let's look at the one which took the most interesting course.

E. Geller – P. Keres

Zurich 1953

6...exd5 7.e4!



Expecting the reply 7...♘c6, White strikes an energetic blow in the centre and opens the path for his bishop on f1. Now 7...♘xe4 8.♘xd5 ♔a5† 9.b4! or 7...dxe4 8.♔xd8† ♕xd8 9.♘g5! would not be good for Black.

7...♘c6 8.♕b5

The white queen does not aim to leave the centre just yet.

8...♘xe4 9.0–0!

Sacrificing a pawn, Geller plays in his characteristic sharp style. At this point 9.♘xd5 would be weaker on account of 9...♔a5†!, but it was worth considering 9.♘xe4 dxe4 10.♔xe4† ♔e7 11.♔xe7† ♕xe7 12.♘e5.

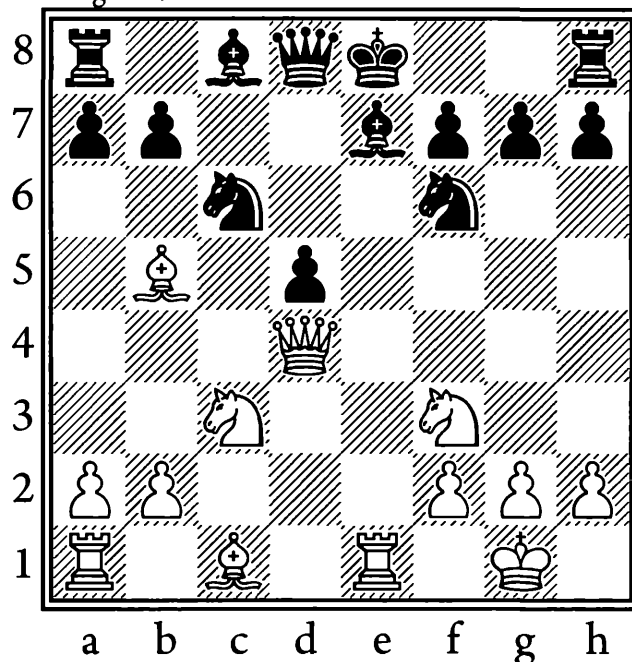
9...♘f6!

Black already has to play with extreme care.

After 9...♘xc3 10.bxc3 his king would be in danger, while 9...♕c5 fails to 10.♔xg7.

10.♔e1† ♕e7

Diagram 91



11.♔e5?

This sad mistake not only reduces all White's previous efforts to nothing but allows Black to maintain his pawn with a good game.

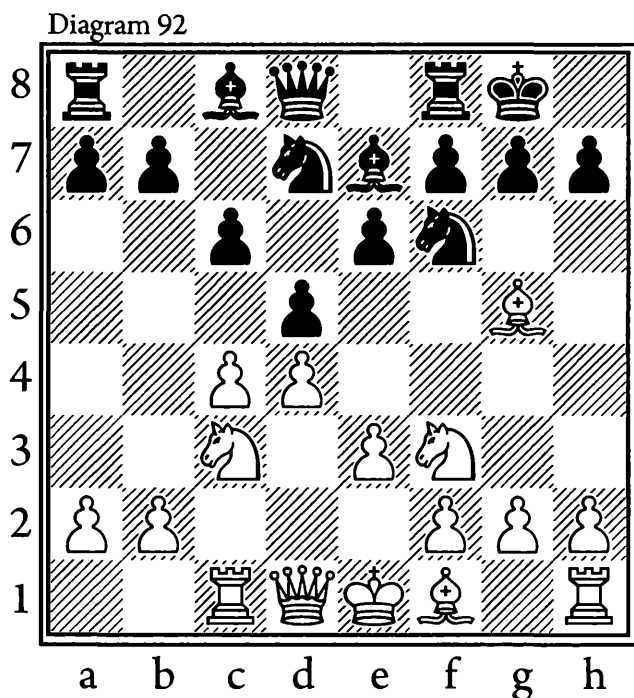
Geller assumed that Black could not castle on account of 12.♕xc6 and 13.♔xe7, but nonetheless Keres played:

11...0–0!

Geller then realized that on 12.♕xc6 Black would first play the intermediate move 12...♕d6!, and only then 13...bxc6. Instead of 11.♔e5? White should have continued with 11.♕xc6† bxc6 12.♔c5, winning the pawn back and keeping the initiative.

If the foregoing cases of a queen sortie proved unamenable to stereotyped precepts, this applies even more to the question of early pawn moves. The rule that you should avoid making numerous pawn moves in the opening, on the grounds that this does not further the mobilization of your forces, loses its validity in all cases where it can be shown that the

pawn moves arise from a specific, purposeful plan – in other words that they are not superfluous but necessary.



The diagram position arises in the Orthodox Defence to the Queen's Gambit, after **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.g5 Be7 5.f3 0-0 6.e3 Bd7 7.Bc1 c6**. There have been many games in which, rather than continue to deploy his forces, White has played 8.a3 and 9.h3.

Why is this? Aren't these moves a waste of time in the opening? The answer may appear paradoxical: with the aid of these non-developing moves White is trying to *gain* a tempo! But it will all become comprehensible once we acquaint ourselves with some of the ideas of this variation.

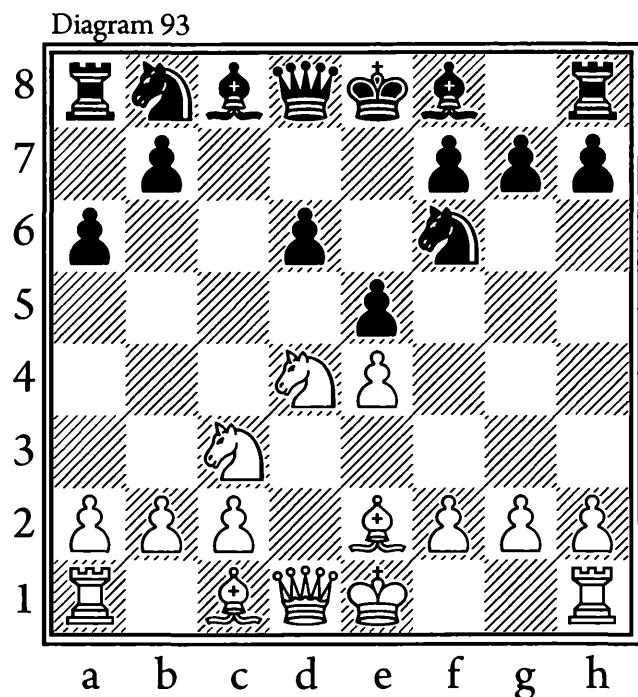
The point is this. In order to solve one of the crucial problems of his development – the problem of bringing his bishop out from c8 – Black frequently answers 8.g5 with what is known as Capablanca's simplifying manoeuvre: 8...dxc4 9.gxc4 Nd5 10.gxe7 Bxe7 11.0-0 Nxc3 12.Bxc3 e5.

As you see, the manoeuvre begins with a capture on c4. White therefore decides to wait for

Black's d5xc4 in order to retake on that square with his bishop in one move. Instead of 8.g5 dxc4 9.gxc4, he reckons on continuing 8.a3 dxc4 9.gxc4. He will then have played a2-a3 – a very useful move in the coming struggle – “for free”.

Hence with 8.a3 White is not losing a tempo but striving to gain one. Yet seeing that this move does not develop anything, Black is of course by no means obliged to comply with his opponent's wish but can join in the struggle for the tempo himself. This is how the continuation **8.a3 a6 9.h3 Be8** arose. It is only then, after White's **10.g5**, that Black finally replies **10...dxc4**.

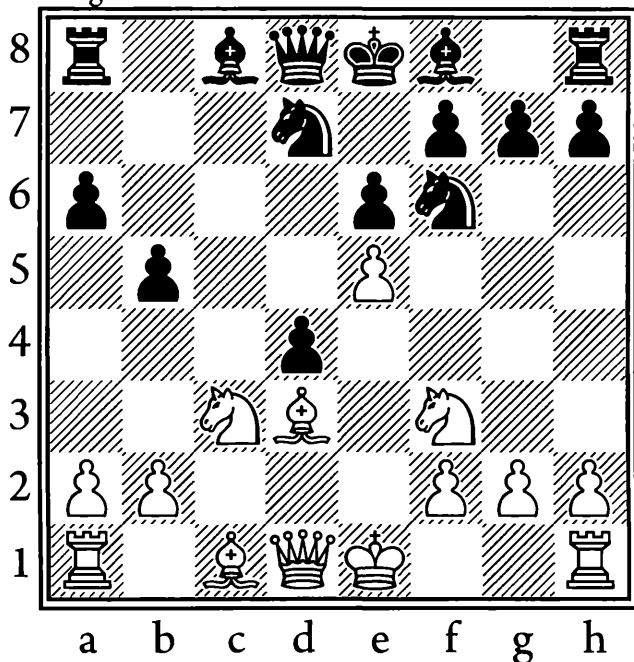
A different type of case arises when numerous pawn moves are an integral part of the opening system itself. For example a line in the Sicilian Defence that enjoys wide popularity is the Boleslavsky Variation, characterized by **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.g2 e5**



White has made sparing use of pawn moves and has developed three pieces. Black for his part has made five of his first six moves with pawns and brought only one piece into action. Yet no one has succeeded in proving that this system of defence is unsound.

An even more instructive case is the Meran Variation of the Slav Defence, characterized by 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♘c3 ♘bd7 6.♙d3 dxc4 7.♙xc4 b5 8.♙d3 a6 9.e4 c5 10.e5 cxd4

Diagram 94



Of his first 10 moves, Black has made eight (!) with his pawns. Yet there is no objection to this whatever, since the moves are grounded in a specific plan (rapid queenside expansion and an energetic attack in the centre), and no one has so far managed to cast doubt on its correctness.

In this case, once again, there is obviously no application for the rule which states that in the opening you should make two or three pawn moves and spend the rest of the time developing your pieces. In reality it is permissible to use as many pawn moves as are essential to accomplish a specific and justified chess plan.

A highly effective device in many cases is an early advance of the a- or h-pawn by either player. Thus for example in the King's Indian Defence, Black often pushes his pawn from a7 to a4. There are examples in other openings:

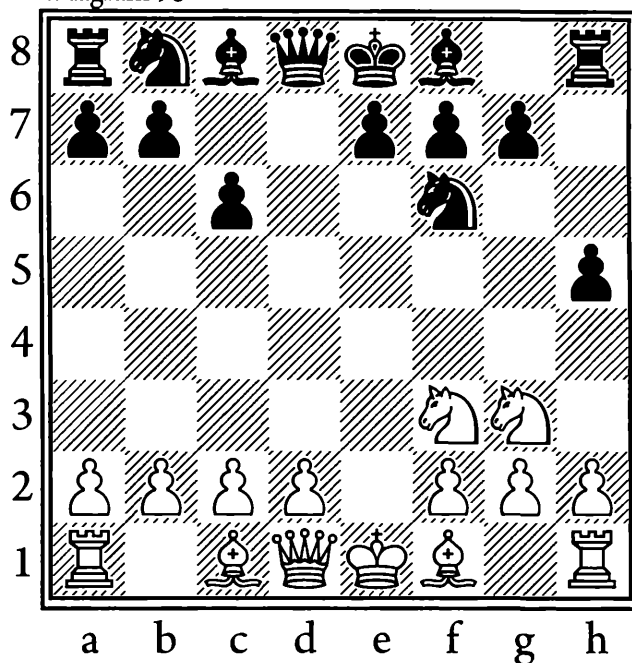
V. Korchnoi – L. Aronin

Moscow 1952

1.e4 c6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♘f3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘f6 5.♘g3 h5!

An interesting variation of the Caro-Kann Defence, in which four of Black's first five moves have been made with pawns.

Diagram 95



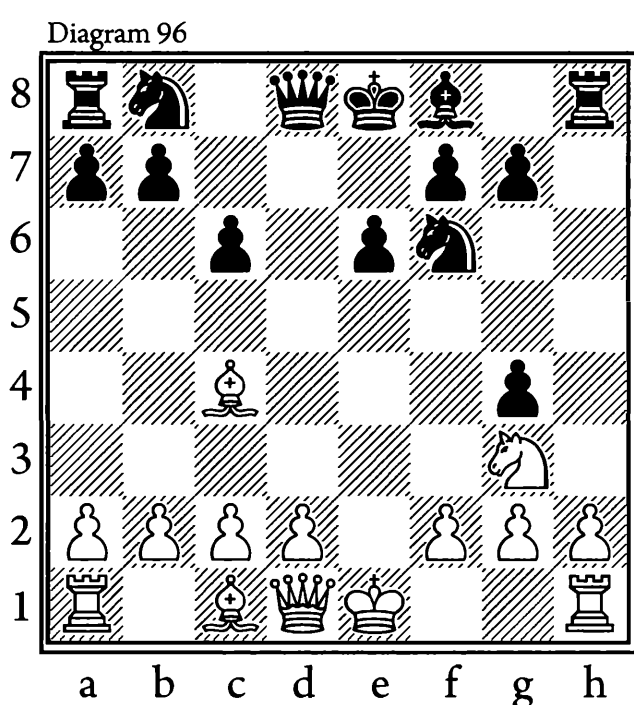
On a dogmatic approach to the problem of mobilizing the forces, Black's last move might seem weak and mistaken, since it deprives him of the chance to castle kingside and does not contribute to his development. However, taking a concrete, creative approach, we perceive the following:

- (1) 5...h5! is an attacking manoeuvre to disrupt the peaceful development of White's kingside.
- (2) Black's loss of kingside castling is therefore immaterial. He is not far away from castling queenside.
- (3) Non-standard moves such as 5...h5! give the game a tense, combative character from the very outset, which undoubtedly is of great importance.

Play continued:

6.♔c4 ♕g4

In his theoretical survey of the tournament, A. Chistiakov wrote that with this last move Aronin was “committing an obvious error”. This opinion is likely to have been prompted by the actual result of the game; to me it seems unfounded. After the further moves **7.♘e5 e6 8.♘xg4** Black replied **8...♘xg4?**, but instead he should have played **8...hxg4!**, a move which logically follows from the idea of 5...h5.



Black would then have strong pressure on the h-file while his pawn on g4 would be noticeably cramping the opponent’s kingside. Hence Black’s “obvious error” was not at all 6...♕g4 – the move rejected by Chistiakov – but 8...♘xg4.

As an alternative to 6...♕g4, the h-pawn could have been pushed further. In the next example the swift advance of the h-pawn brings Black a quick victory.

W. Schuster – C. Carls

Bremen 1914

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘f6

5.♘g3 h5 6.♕g5 h4!

By driving the knight to e2, Black hampers the development of the enemy kingside.

7.♕xf6

White aims to return his knight to the centre, so he removes the hostile knight from f6. But an unpleasant surprise awaits him.

7...hxg3!

Now the bishop on f6 and the pawn on h2 are both *en prise*, so White’s next move is forced.

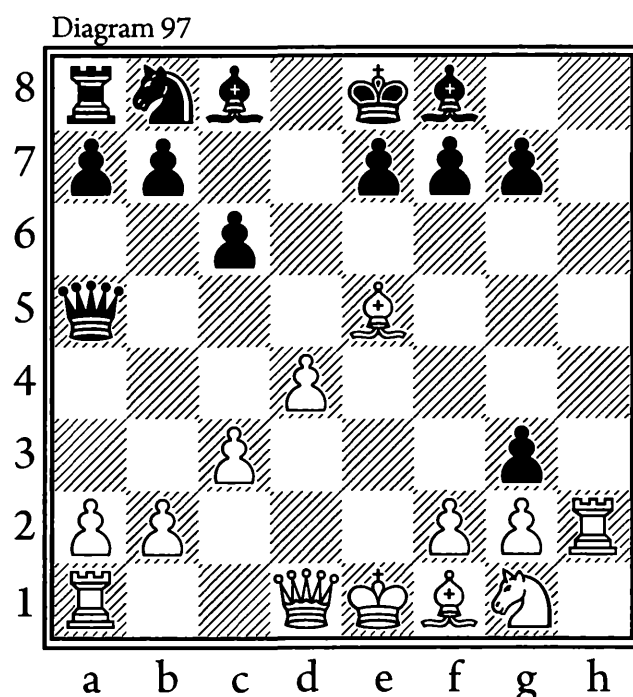
8.♕e5 ♖xh2! 9.♖xh2

The black h-pawn has already reached the third rank and is gripped with immense excitement, which is wholly understandable: after all, every pawn dreams of becoming a queen. This one just needs to cross two more ranks to reach the cherished goal. The ambitious pawn is now aided by the queen, which offers itself as a sacrifice – though it does so in order to be reincarnated a mere two moves later.

Black played:

9...♕a5†! 10.c3

If 10.♖d2 then 10...gxf2†!



10...♔xe5†!! 11.dxe5 gxh2

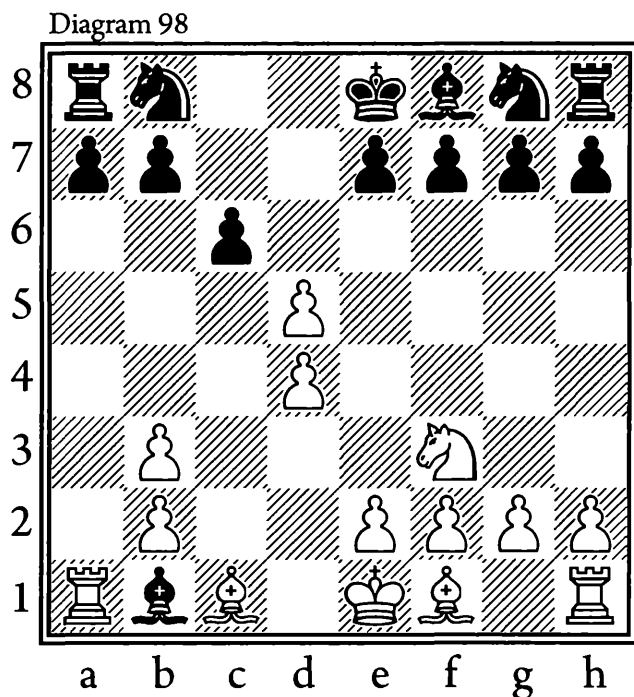
The black pawn's breathtaking career (h7-h5-h4xg3xh2) culminates in its promotion to a queen.

An analogous idea of queening a pawn at such an early stage in the opening formed the basis of the combination that took place in the following game.

K. Schlechter – J. Perlis

Carlsbad 1911

**1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f5 3.c4 c6 4.♔b3 ♔b6
5.cxd5 ♔xb3 6.axb3 ♘xb1**



Before recapturing Black decides to eliminate the white knight, to stop it from going to c3 and b5 – but White proves to have seen further.

7. dxc6!!

If Black now replies 7...♘e4 (to save his bishop and defend against 8.cxb7), White wins with 8.♔xa7!! ♔xa7 9.c7! and the pawn queens on move ten. Perlis played 7...♘xc6, but after **8.♔xb1** he was left a pawn down.

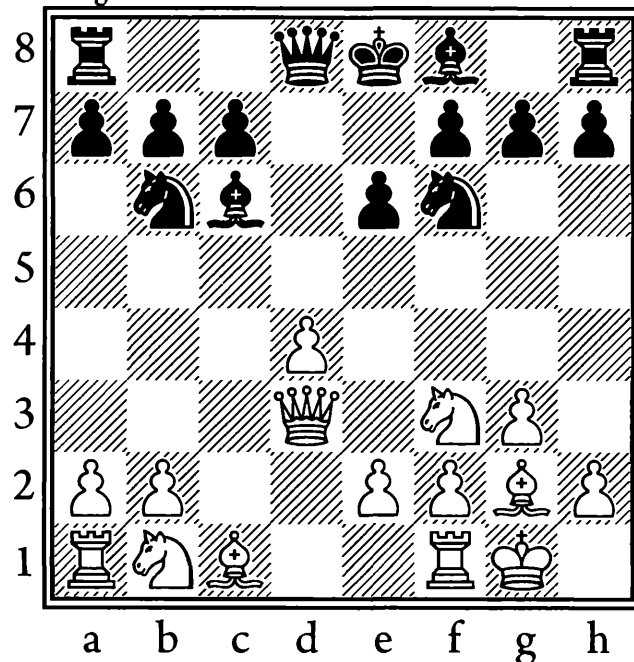
And now one final example of pawn moves in the opening.

P. Keres – I. Lipnitsky

Moscow 1950

**1.c4 ♘f6 2.d4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♘g2 dxc4
5.♔a4† ♘d7 6.♔xc4 ♘c6 7.♘f3 ♘bd7
8.0-0! ♘b6 9.♔d3**

Diagram 99

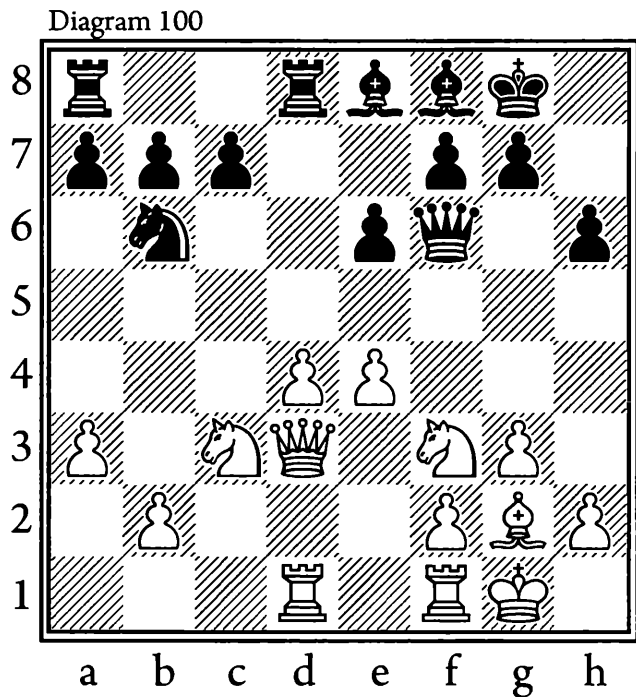


Black now played 9...h6 10.♘bd2 a6. What is the point of these seemingly useless moves with the rook's pawns?

The main theme of the position is the fight for control of e4. If White succeeds in playing e2-e4 Black can land in difficulties, since with his bishop on c6 it would not be easy to attack the white centre by means of c7-c5.

Note the exclamation mark accompanying White's 8th move. In an earlier game Smyslov – Keres (World Championship Match Tournament, The Hague 1948) White had played 8.♘c3 (instead of 8.0-0!), and this was answered by 8...♘b6 9.♔d3 ♘b4!. It is true that White can still achieve e2-e4, for example with 10.0-0 0-0 11.♘g5 h6! 12.♘xf6 ♔xf6 13.e4, but Black has time to regroup by 13...♔fd8!

14.♖ad1 ♕e8! 15.a3 ♕f8!.



This remarkable regrouping of Black's forces, aimed at preparing an attack on the white centre with c7-c5, was accomplished by Alekhine in a game against Junge (Munich 1942).

But in Keres – Lipnitsky, as we see from the penultimate diagram, White has played more strongly with 8.0–0! (instead of 8.♖c3) 8...♖b6 9.♔d3. What is Black to do now? In this position 9...♕b4 would evidently be striking at empty space. On the other hand after 9...♕e7 10.♕g5 h6 11.♕xf6 ♕xf6 12.♖c3 0–0 13.e4, Black cannot carry out Alekhine's effective regrouping manoeuvre since his queen lacks a suitable square. 13...♔e7 would lose the bishop on f6, while 13...♔d7 blocks the other bishop's retreat. Black could withdraw this bishop to e8 at once, but then the rook on f8 would be shut in.

So Black opted for:

9...h6

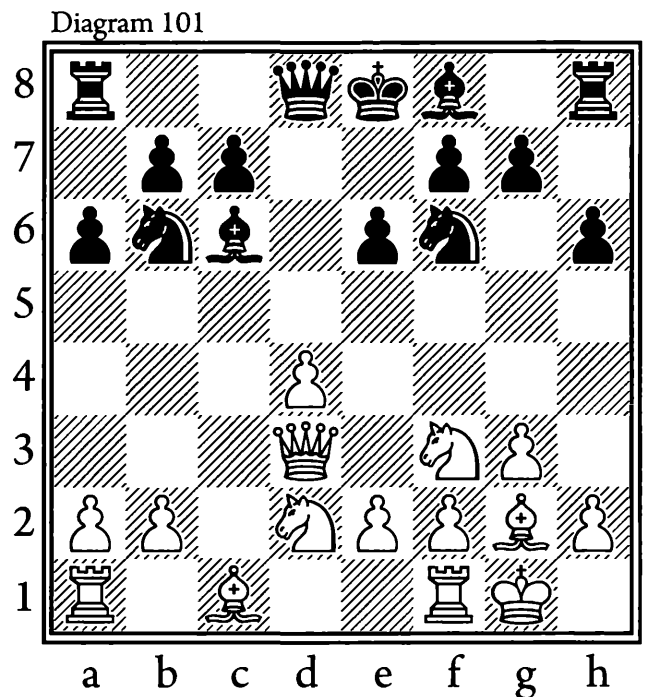
This enables him to keep his knight on f6 in the fight for the centre. The game continued:

10.♖bd2

Of course 10.♖c3 would be met by 10...♕b4!,

but now in answer to that same bishop move White simply plays 11.e4!, threatening 12.♖e5. Black therefore replied:

10...a6



Don't imagine that Black *enjoys* spending time in the opening on these pawn moves at the edge of the board. However, a7-a6 permits him to fight successfully against e2-e4, not only next move (in view of 11...♕b5) but also later on – since he acquires the possibility of ♕c6-b5 and c7-c5 in order to attack White's centre.

11.b3 ♕e7

11...♕b4 might have been even better.

12.♕b2 0–0 13.♖fd1 ♕b5 14.♖c4 ♖xc4 15.bxc4 ♕a4 16.♖db1 ♕c6

And c7-c5 was already an alternative.

17.♔c3 ♖e4 18.♔c2 ♖d6 19.♖d1 ♔e8 20.a4 ♕f6 21.♕f1 ♕e4 22.♔b3 b5

Black's strategy has fully justified itself. White did not manage to carry through e2-e4, and Black even obtained some positional advantage.

In this game too, as you can easily see, the patented recipes for the opening remained unused.

Black deliberately made two moves with his rook's pawns in the opening – 9...h6 and 10...a6 – at the expense of his own development, since he saw this as the best concrete means of contending with White's strategy.

I could show you dozens more instances of bringing the queen out early or making “wasteful” pawn advances, but I feel the examples already given emphasize clearly enough that chess rules should be applied with plenty of circumspection, in accordance with the specific nature of the position.

In the Tolush – Alatortsev game, neglecting the principle of full-speed mobilization proved fatal to Black, but in the examples that followed, this same principle played no decisive role;

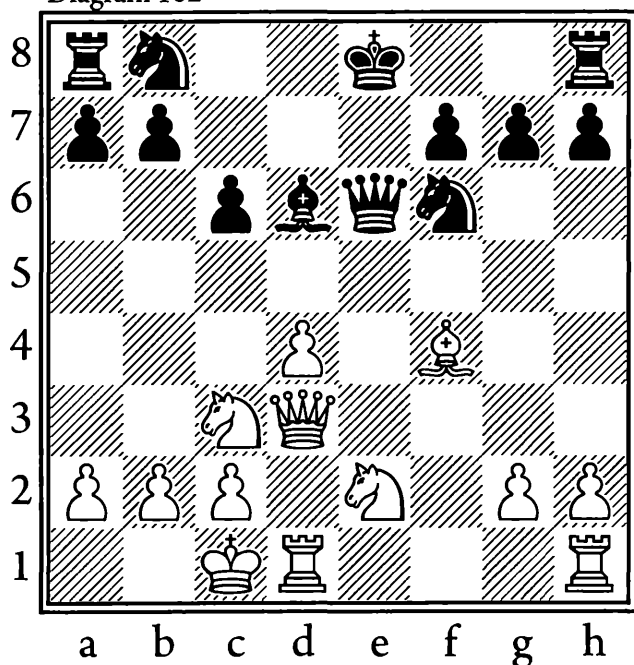
concrete approach to the position showed that some other factors counted for more.

Thus in Keres – Lipnitsky, Black could permit himself the pawn moves 9...h6 and 10...a6 because he had specifically weighed up:

- (1) the usefulness of these moves within the general scheme of the struggle that had unfolded, and
- (2) White's inability to utilize his temporary lead in development.

So in some cases, breaking the law of speedy mobilization leads to great difficulties and ruin, while in other cases it goes wholly unpunished. For a better understanding of this issue, let's compare the following diagrams.

Diagram 102

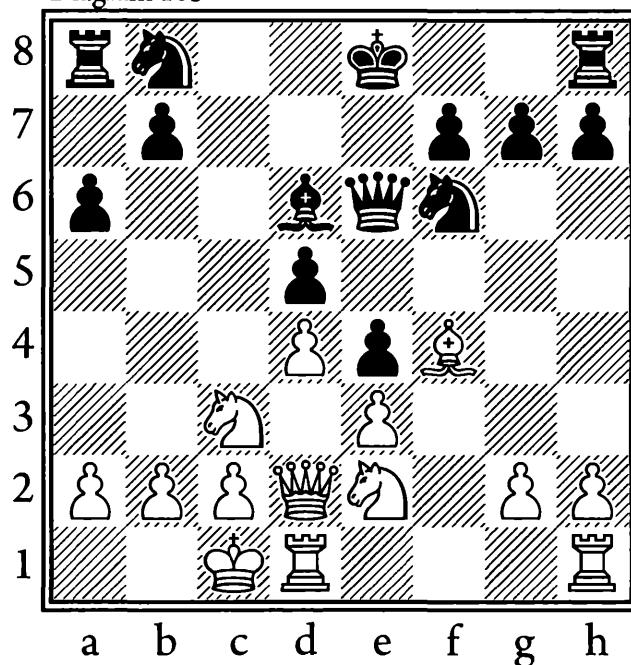


White has brought twice as many pieces into action. In the first diagram position (taken, as we recall, from Tolush – Alatortsev), this guarantees him a quick win, while in the second diagram, Black's position is solid, and there appears to be no way for White to exploit his development advantage.

Why is this?

In the first case the position is open. The open

Diagram 103



lines and varied possibilities for active piece play enable White to go straight ahead with the attack.

In the second case the position is closed, the central files are firmly sealed by the double row of pawn barriers, and the scope for manoeuvring the pieces is greatly reduced. It is extremely hard for White to break through the front and organize an invasion with his excellently mobilized forces.

An analogy with warlike operations in real life can be drawn. We know that with an unbroken line of defensive works, a small force is capable of holding off a far superior force.

On the other hand when no such line exists, and the defence consists merely of isolated pockets of resistance, it is much easier for the attackers to find a possibility of breaking through and penetrating to the enemy's rear.

So it is in chess. The more open the position, the more a lead in development makes itself felt. Conversely, in closed and semi-closed positions, losses of tempo are permissible – assuming they have a specific justification.

When *can* a loss of tempo in the opening be considered justified? The answer *depends on how effective our control of the centre will be.*

In the examples we examined, the losses of tempo in the opening were directly linked to a successful fight for the centre (for instance Korchnoi's manoeuvre ♖d1-a4-e4 in his game with Flohr, or the pawn moves h7-h6 and a7-a6 in Keres – Lipnitsky).

So it is with the Meran Variation. We saw Black make eight of his first ten moves with his pawns, but in so doing he was energetically fighting in the centre to eliminate his opponent's d- and e-pawns.

Alekhine's well-known pronouncement that "you may only lose time in cases where this gives you control of strongpoints" should also, in my view, be understood only in close connection with the centre.

This kind of link between the mobilization of forces and the centre is perfectly understandable. As I have said already, these are the two supreme, overriding principles of the opening. *If one side violates the principle of mobilizing the pieces as fast as possible, it can only be for the sake of implementing the other key principle – that of the centre – in a specific situation.*

In this connection I feel it is essential and timely to discuss the extremely important question of how effective chess rules and principles are.

Chapter

6

Evaluating the Position

In the course of playing a game of chess you acquaint yourself with a large number of different positions which come about, one by one, on the chessboard. Other positions, many times more numerous, appear before your mind's eye while you are calculating variations.

After all, any variation *is* an unbroken chain of specific positions following one after the other. Obviously a chessplayer's strength is proportional to the correctness with which he evaluates these positions. The winner is the player able to perform the deeper and more penetrating assessment of the positions that arise in the course of the struggle or in the variations he calculates.

Thus, the art of correctly and objectively appraising a position is the decisive factor in a player's skill which prompts him to take the right decision. Yet appraising the position objectively is fairly difficult, especially in the conditions of practical play with limited thinking time for your moves.

The extremely important idea that a player's actions should flow from a correct assessment of the position was elaborated for the first time by the first World Chess Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz. It constituted an immense contribution to the development of chess theory.

Before Steinitz, what universally prevailed was a highly idealistic notion that brilliant chess combinations, bold attacks and ingenious traps were nothing but manifestations of some "divine spark" – some inspiration peculiar to the player who creates these combinations "out of nothing", purely by the power of his genius.

Chessplayers of the so-called romantic period would sacrifice pieces right left and centre with the greatest nonchalance, believing that the moment would come when they could finish the game with an unexpected combination.

When this method of play triumphed, the games would quite often be of astounding beauty, splendour and brilliance. Contemporaries bestowed special titles on some of them, such as "the Immortal" or "the Evergreen". Steinitz, for instance, said of the Anderssen – Dufresne game: "This is the evergreen game from Anderssen's laurel wreath."

Steinitz's chief merit was that he gave chess theory a materialistic basis. He showed that what is primary and fundamental in chess is the position on the board which serves as the source from which the ideas arise.

Yet it was not enough to proclaim that evaluating the position was fundamental. It was

important to show what criteria should be applied to the position and its assessment. Steinitz worked out a set of such “criteria”. Grandmaster Kotov wrote about this in his book *Alexander Alekhine’s Chess Heritage*:

“The basic rules of positional play were formulated for the first time in their fullest breadth by the first World Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz.

Even before Steinitz, there had been masters who unearthed important isolated positional rules. Thus for example Philidor and Petrov offered an overall conception of the role of the pawns in the chess struggle, while Morphy in his remarkable games showed the importance of developing the pieces as fast as possible. Steinitz amalgamated the researches of earlier chess thinkers and formulated the laws of positional chess.

He showed how to evaluate a chess position. In much the same way as a chemist can discern the composition of a substance by breaking it down into its simplest elements, a chess master ought to be able to assess any position by analysing and dismantling it into its ‘component parts’. Such components are the material balance of forces, the arrangement of the pieces, weak and strong squares, open files, etc.

By comparing the balance of positive and negative elements in the White and Black positions, a master can determine with relative accuracy which side is more favourably placed. This important discovery by Steinitz served as a spur to developing the theory of chess and raising the strength of the players.

Setting out from the methods of positional evaluation which he had established, and his ideas about the positional elements, Steinitz laid down a series of important principles and rules to be followed by chessplayers in their games. For example, ‘don’t create weak squares in your own camp’, ‘occupy the open files

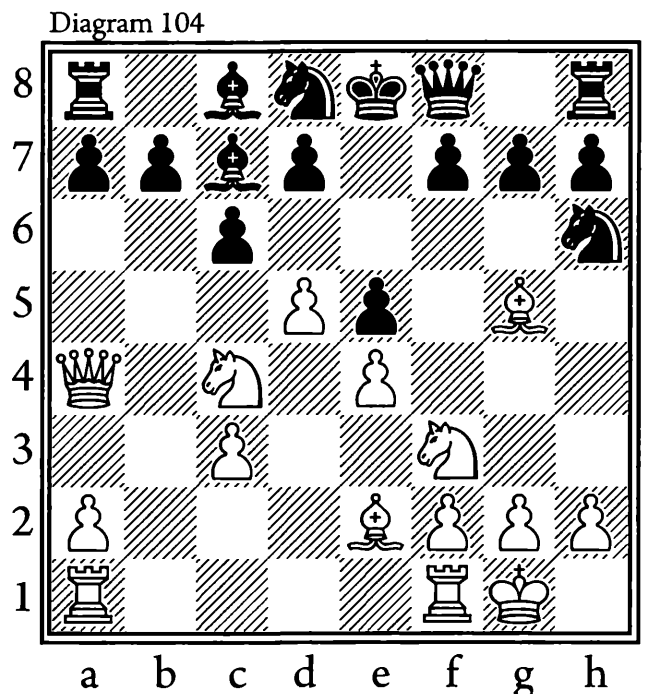
with your rooks’, etc. The formulation of these principles was Steinitz’s undoubted historical service...”

With time, the chess world completely took on board the notion that an objective assessment of the position was the basis for choosing the correct move or plan. Yet some major, radical, fundamentally important disagreements emerged over a different question: by what methods was the correct, objective assessment to be reached?

Not taking sufficient interest in the concrete peculiarities of the individual position, Steinitz clearly overrated the significance of the principles and rules he had laid down; he supposed them to be suited to all of life’s situations. In this respect, his comment on the following position (from the first game of his cable match with Chigorin, 1890-91) is characteristic.

M. Chigorin – W. Steinitz

Cable match (1) 1890



“My opponent is conducting the attack in the same way as in most match games against me, that is, as a representative of the old school. He is convinced of the usefulness of pressing for-

ward with his pawns and even sacrificing one or more of them in order to give his opponent trouble on the kingside or constrict the enemy pieces.

For my part I maintain that the king is a strong piece which in most cases is capable of defending itself; and that, given his method of playing the attack, Chigorin will have to bring up his major pieces, obstructing his minor ones. I also believe that my own minor pieces will be developed successfully, and that Chigorin's pawns, far advanced and unable to retreat, will become the object of my future counter-attack. At present I have an extra pawn; I am likely to lose it, but in return my position will improve."

Such a categorical judgement is "scholastic" in character. True enough, Steinitz more than once succeeded in repulsing powerful attacks against his king, but his general conclusion – that a king subjected to a direct middlegame attack is a strong piece – arouses doubts and is, to say the least, exaggerated. Everything depends on the specific circumstances.

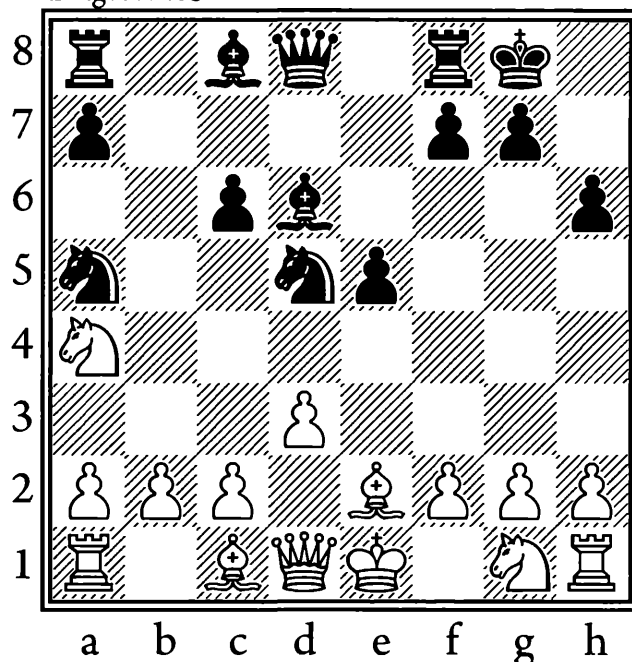
Steinitz says that by bringing his major pieces into the battle White will be obstructing the action of his minor ones. Why obstructing, and not supporting, strengthening? This is incomprehensible. As for the comment on the usefulness of advancing or sacrificing the pawns, this is another issue that Steinitz is treating abstractly, not in close conjunction with the general plan of attack.

Steinitz's comment on the following position, which arose in the second game of the same match by telegraph, is no less revealing.

W. Steinitz – M. Chigorin

Cable match (2nd game)

Diagram 105



"Six of my pawns are on their starting squares, which according to my theory is a great advantage, especially for the endgame when it is most important to have the right to move a pawn one or two squares at your own discretion.

In addition, not one of my pieces can be attacked by the opponent's pawns for a long time to come."

Chigorin followed fundamentally different creative guidelines in his own play. Here is what he wrote about the evaluation of the last diagram position:

"Not regarding myself as belonging to any 'school' whatever, I was directed not by abstract theoretical considerations about the comparative strength of the pieces etc., but solely by the data presenting themselves to me in this or that game situation which formed the object of my analysis – as detailed and precise an analysis as possible. Each of my moves represents the conclusion drawn from a number of variations in which the theoretical principles of the game [*this evidently means the 'established' principles,*

not principles of theory as such – I.L.] could only be of limited importance.”

It is not by chance that I have cited these very games from the match by telegraph. The point is that in his chess manual *The Modern Chess Instructor* Steinitz had evaluated both variations as favourable to the side with the extra pawn. Chigorin took precisely the opposite view, holding that the pawn minus was more than made up for by the acquisition of the initiative.

Chigorin suggested settling this fundamental dispute by a two-game cable match. Under the conditions of playing by telegraph, both players had adequate time available for thinking about their moves, and this virtually excluded any elements of chance from the outcome of the games.

By his brilliant victory in both games, Chigorin demonstrated the supremacy of his own creative and concrete approach to the position, over Steinitz’s abstract scholastic arguments.

In the converting of useful chess rules and principles into incontrovertible dogmas, another significant role was played by Steinitz’ follower, Grandmaster Siegbert Tarrasch, of whom Lasker – a stranger to chess dogmatism – aptly observed that he “constantly reiterated certain sound thoughts about positional play, but showed no understanding, or even perhaps respect, for what is unique and unrepeatable.” In chess literature Tarrasch is usually acknowledged to be an even more blatant dogmatist than Steinitz. In this connection it is interesting to note that Chigorin, who had played dozens of tournament games against both of them and knew them both well, was of a different opinion. He once asserted that Tarrasch, though Steinitz’s follower, was more flexible, less inclined to cling stubbornly to dogmas appropriated once and for all – and that this made him all the more dangerous as an opponent in practical play.

In one of his books, reacting to the many accusations of dogmatism levelled against him, Tarrasch himself inserted an article in which he speaks ironically of those who assimilate his chess principles all too straightforwardly, without allowing for the demands of the position. Thus for example he sarcastically suggests that his endgame rule about the rook belonging behind the pawn ought to be corrected by adding, “if this is advantageous”. The immense merit of the outstanding representatives of the Russian chess school – Chigorin, Alekhine and Botvinnik – lies precisely in promoting the sole correct method of approaching the evaluation of a position, the essence of which is *to establish the objective truth by means of analysis*.

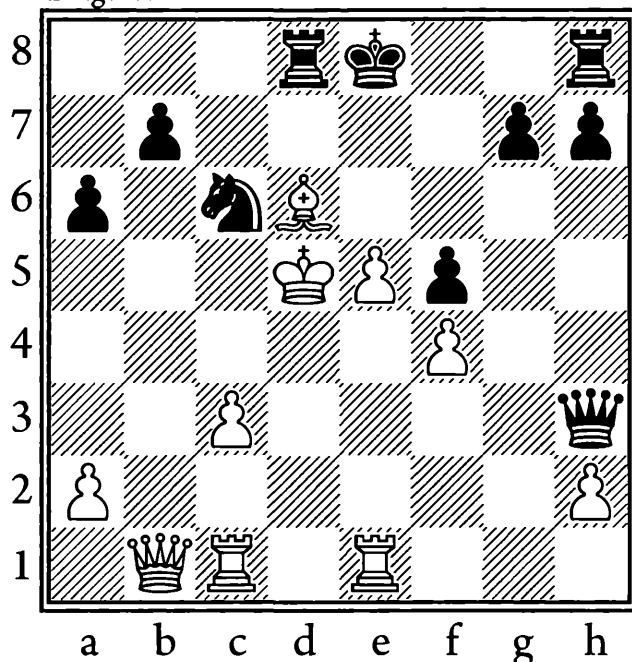
This does not mean that the significance of various chess rules, principles and norms is reduced to nothing. As ever, they play a major role. But they are now applied not dogmatically but imaginatively, with a direct and specific regard for all the possibilities inherent in the position.

Let’s explain the essence of this method by a series of examples.

M. Chigorin – H. Caro

Vienna 1898

Diagram 106



“With this remarkable position on the board, some spectators mentioned to the tournament controller that White must have placed his king and queen the wrong way round.” (*quoted from the tournament book*)

The white king right in the middle of the board does indeed have a tragicomic look about it. I have sometimes invited my students to evaluate this position. Many of them took Black’s side with a fair amount of conviction, precisely because of the white king in the centre.

One young player, suspecting a trick, was quick to assess the position in White’s favour. When asked for his reasons, he gave a most notable answer: “It obviously *looks* bad for White, so if it *was*, you wouldn’t be asking us about it.”

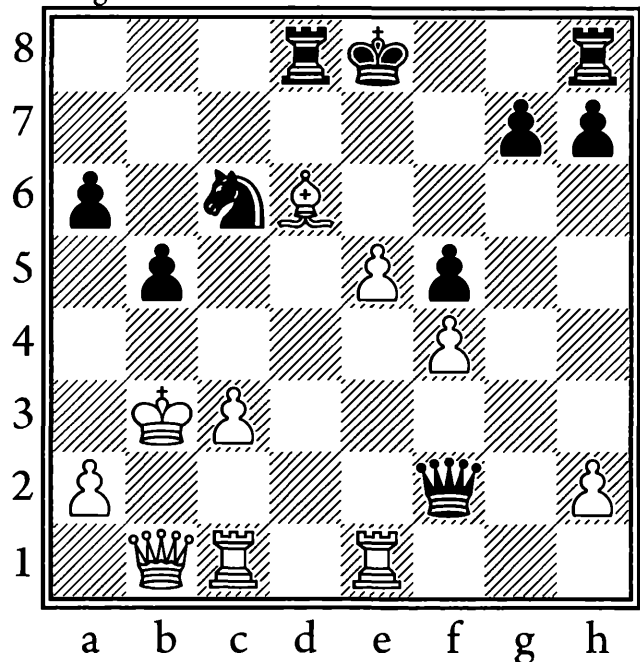
Yet in chess the most obvious thing sometimes turns into its opposite. Once this even prompted Grandmaster Réti to say, “We young men don’t believe in rules, we believe in exceptions.”

Chigorin’s assessment of the diagram position was based on a concrete approach. He was applying those creative guidelines which he expressed in the following sentence: “Mastery of the art of combination, the ability in any situation to find the most effective move to carry through your chosen plan as quickly as possible – this is higher than any principles, or more correctly there *is* only one principle in chess, and this is its definition.”

In the game, there followed:

25...♞g2† 26.♔c4 b5† 27.♔d3 ♞f3†
28.♔c2 ♞f2† 29.♔b3

Diagram 107



29...♞c8

“After 29...♞a5† 30.♔b4! ♞c8, Black draws if White takes the knight: 31.♔xa5 ♞c4 32.♔b4 ♞a7 33.♞xf5 ♞c7† 34.♔xa6 ♞c6†! 35.♔a5 ♞a8† 36.♔xb5 ♞c6† etc. However if White defends with 31.♞c2! ♞c4† 32.♔a3 ♞xf4 33.♞d1, play proceeds much as in the game continuation. For example, 33...♞a4† 34.♔b2 ♞c4 is met by 35.♔b1 ♞e6 (else e5-e6) 36.♞f3, or 36.♔b4! etc.” (*Here and subsequently, the comments in quotation marks are Chigorin’s.*)

30.♞c2 ♞xf4 31.♔b2 ♞a5 32.♔a1 ♞c4
33.e6!

Having brought his king to safety, White goes over to the attack.

33...♞c6 34.♞d1 h5

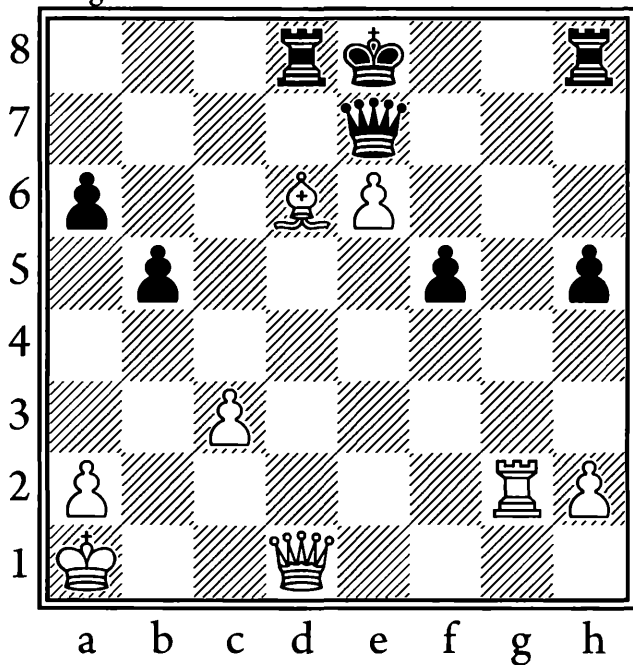
“Of course 34...♞d8 would have been better. But even then, or indeed after 34...g6, Black wouldn’t be able to escape from his constricted position and bring his king’s rook into action. For example 34...♞d8 35.♞e3, and if 35...♞e7 36.♞d2 ♞g6, then 37.♔b4 etc.”

35.♞g1 ♞h7

“This doesn’t stop White from taking the pawn. There would be a more interesting finish if Black defended with 35...♞d8

36.♖xg7 ♔h4 37.♖cg2 ♜e7 38.♖xe7† ♔xe7.

Diagram 108



Now White plays 39.♔xh5†! ♖xh5 40.♖g8† ♔f8 41.♖xf8 mate.”

36.♖xg7!

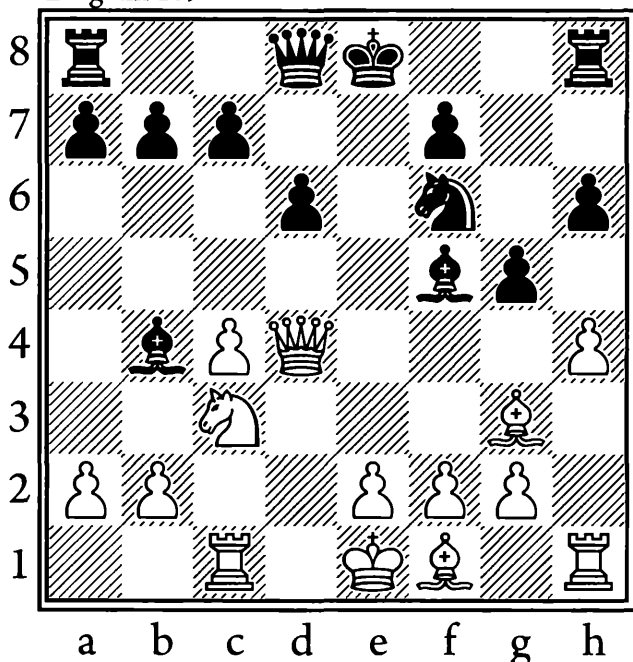
Black resigned. In this game the concrete approach to the position celebrated a complete triumph!

P. Keres – K. Richter

Munich 1942

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♙b4 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙h4 g5 8.♙g3 d6 9.♖c1 ♘xd4 10.♔xd4 ♙f5 11.h4

Diagram 109



White’s last move looks very strong. The following reasons might support this impression:

- (a) 11...g4 12.h5!, threatening 13.♙h4.
- (b) 11...♙c5 12.♔d2!, increasing the pressure against g5.
- (c) 11...♖g8 12.hxg5, advantageously opening the h-file.

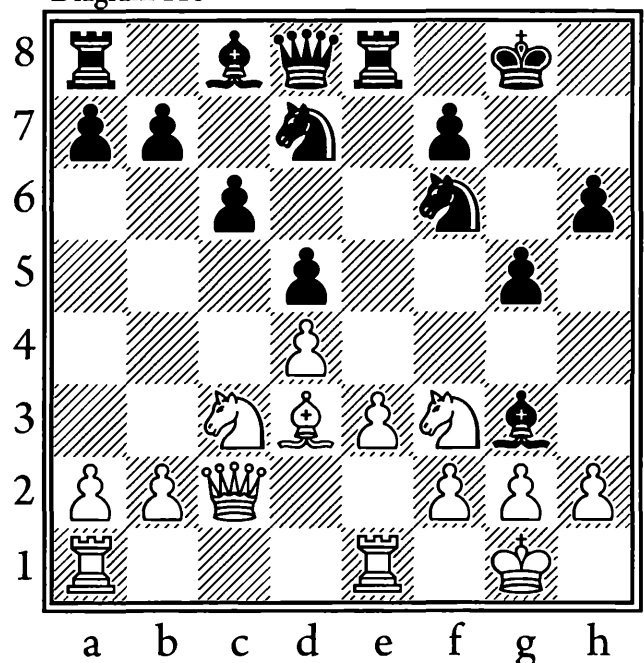
White will, then, have examined all the natural, obvious-looking replies for his opponent. However, Black found a reply which would seem to fly in the face of the established rules and yet supplies the best concrete solution to his problem.

He played **11...♔d7!!**. Alekhine gives this move the double exclamation mark and observes that it deprives White’s flank attack of any point. But there is more to it than that. There are various threats arising for Black. For instance, ♘f6-e4 followed by ♙b4-c5 (or ...♘xc3, ...♘xg3) etc. On 12.♙e5 Black has 12...♙c5!, and if 13.♙xf6 then 13...♙xd4 14.♙xd8 ♖axd8 with advantage.

Now consider this example:

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♙g5 ♙e7 6.e3 0-0 7.♙d3 ♘bd7 8.♔c2 ♖e8 9.♘f3 c6 10.0-0 h6 11.♙h4 ♙d6 12.♖fe1 g5 13.♙g3 ♙xg3

Diagram 110



With his 13th move Black has taken White's bishop on g3. White obviously has two ways of recapturing. Which is better?

There is a positional rule which recommends capturing in the direction of the centre and preserving the compactness of your pawn mass – with h2xg3. But if you want to win the game it is not sufficient to rely on notions of that sort. After 14.hxg3 ♖g7, it is not easy for White to demonstrate an advantage.

We need to look for a solution that is not only “correct” but also dangerous to the opponent. Taking the concrete approach to this position, we find that f2xg3! is just such a move.

White has accurately gauged that the attack along the file he is opening will prove very dangerous, while his own pawn weaknesses are immaterial. There followed:

14.fxg3! ♖g7 15.♞e2 ♘f8 16.♞f1 ♙e6

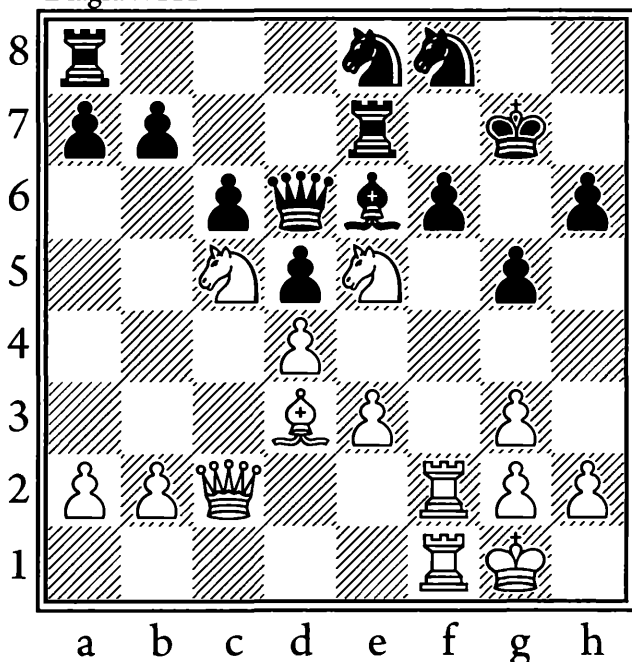
Black would lose quickly after 16...♘g6 17.♙xg6 fxg6 18.♘e5 ♙f5 19.♞xf5! gxf5 20.♞xf5 etc.

17.♘a4!

To eliminate the bishop on e6 which defends the f7-pawn.

17...♞d6 18.♘c5 ♞e7 19.♘e5 ♘e8 20.♞ef2 f6

Diagram 111



21.♙g6!

The start of the decisive attack.

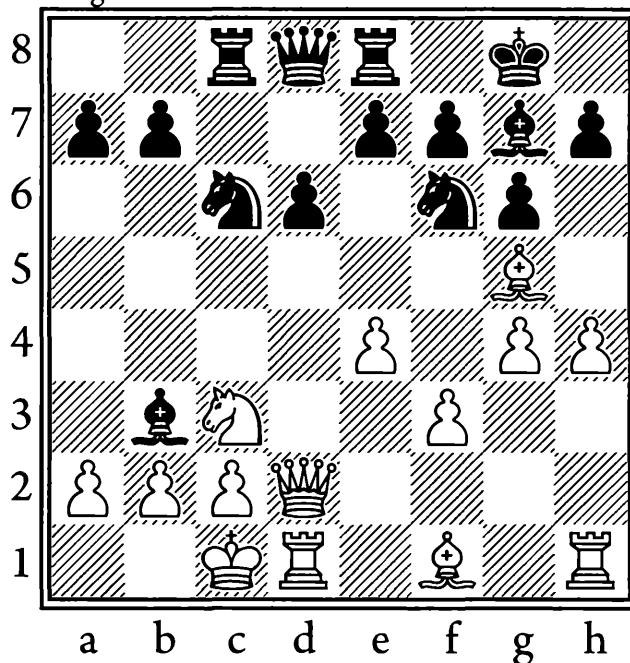
21...b6 22.♙xe8 fxe5 23.♞xf8 ♞axe8 24.♞1f6 e4 25.♘xe6† ♞xe6 26.♞6f7† ♘g6 27.♞f2 ♞xf8 28.♞f5†

It is mate in 5 moves: 28...♘h5 29.g4† ♘h4 30.♞f2† ♘xg4 31.h3† ♘h5 32.g4† ♘g6 33.♞f5 mate. The power of the attack on the f-file after 14.fxg3! was revealed in full.

A further example on the same theme:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♙g5 ♙g7 7.♞d2 0-0 8.f3 ♘c6 9.♘b3 ♙e6 10.g4 ♞e8 11.0-0-0 ♞c8 12.h4 ♙xb3

Diagram 112



Guided by the positional rule about taking towards the centre, which we mentioned before, White played:

13.axb3?

After which his game is hopeless. The conclusion was:

13...♘b4! 14.♙d3 ♞a5 15.♞e3 ♘xg4! 16.fxg4 ♞xc3!

In the Sicilian Defence this kind of rook sacrifice on c3 is highly typical.

17.♔d2 ♖xd3† 18.cxd3 ♜d5†

White resigned. If White had approached the position imaginatively, he would have seen that the only correct solution to the problem was 13.cxb3!. Outwardly, the move looks silly: it offends again the rule of “capturing towards the centre”, and opens the c-file on which the king is placed.

But the concrete peculiarities of the position are such that neither of these factors has any role to play. It is only after 13.cxb3! that White can shelter his king safely on b1 behind his pawns and continue his own attack on the kingside.

Chapter 7

The Concrete Approach

We have now looked at a series of examples – from among the countless number of similar ones – where certain objective chess rules proved ineffective, inasmuch as a concrete, dynamic approach to the position demanded decisions that ran counter to these rules.

Today the concrete, creative approach to assessing a position reigns supreme. Soviet players relying on this method have achieved exceptional successes. This caused Peter Romanovsky to write, in his book *Selected Games*:

“Extreme concreteness of planning, clarity and realism of aims; accurate and far-reaching calculation; a high level of technique, and bold imagination; resistance to routine and stereotype – this is what defines the creative style of the representatives of the Soviet chess school.”

Nonetheless, *up until now the actual essence of the concrete approach to a position has not been made clear.*

I have been saying that the concrete peculiarities of the position play the chief role in the choice of a plan or move – they determine

whether certain chess rules and principles are effective or not. But what kind of concrete peculiarities are we speaking of? What *is* their determining significance? Chess theory has yet to give the answer to these questions.

It seems to me that the issue can only be correctly resolved with the aid of a comprehensive dialectical method of inquiry.

(1) Chess exists and develops on the basis of a permanent set of factors: identical pieces, the fixed rules of the game, the regular alternation of moves. The various combinations of these factors create the millions of possible chess positions, many of which possess similar features. The general goal of each side is constant: to attain victory or a draw.

(2) There are certain underlying laws, norms and principles functioning in any chess positions. The study of chess pursues the aim of revealing these underlying connections, in order to give players a reliable guide for their actions.

(3) The process of acquiring knowledge in chess consists of the following steps:

(a) the study of various specific positions – in other words the initial, immediate perception of the game;

(b) generalizing from these positions; penetrating into their essence; disclosing general laws, norms, principles.

The whole process of inquiry and its conclusions are inseparably linked to practical tests, which measure the value of the “truths” we have attained.

(4) In every chess position, a certain set of objective laws, norms and principles operates in a concealed manner. Many of them have yet to be brought to light and formulated. Performing a correct evaluation of the position and selecting a move solely on the basis of established, familiar truths is not always feasible. If those laws and principles which are already established and known to us are the *paramount, overriding* ones in the position, then a fairly faithful evaluation can be made on their basis. Yet the essence of many a position is defined by laws and principles which, though objectively they exist, are not yet in our possession.

How are we *then* to evaluate the position? The standards that are known to us will prove useless. Other standards are unavailable. From the well-known dictum that truth is concrete, it follows conversely that the concrete approach reflects a distinct truth – and makes up, so to speak, for the absence of a particular chess law or rule. It is therefore incorrect to say that the creative, concrete approach to a position reduces the validity of chess rules or contradicts them.

The whole point is that in any particular position, *the rejection of some laws (directives) merely makes way for the affirmation and success of others.*

Thus, chess generalizations and the concrete

approach fruitfully complement each other in the course of the struggle or the analysis. Chess generalizations must only be used concretely, imaginatively. Today the most important theoretical task undoubtedly lies in still further extending the bounds of our chess knowledge, revealing new laws and principles and extracting the full value from the extremely rich experience and achievements of the strongest contemporary players.

(5) The scientific study of the game does not at all diminish the role and significance of chess imagination. On the contrary, by opening up new horizons, it only serves to develop this imagination and direct it along the right path.

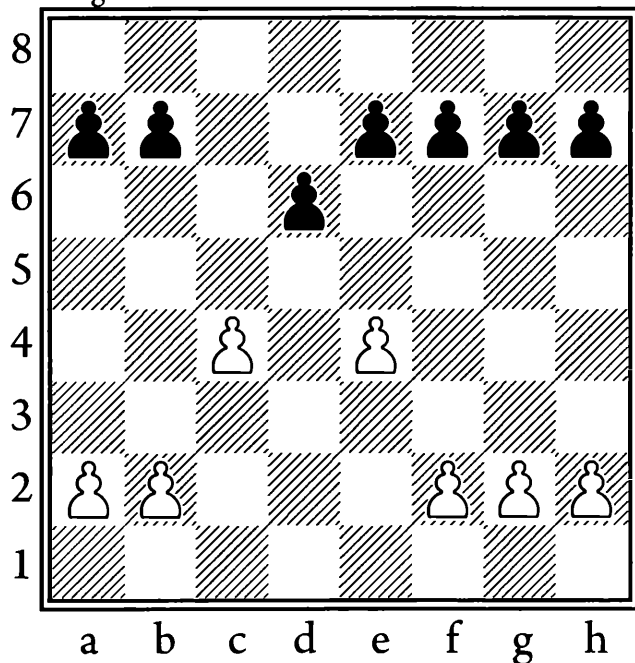
It is naive to fear that with the evolution of theory and the disclosure of its secrets, the chess struggle may at some time lose its attractiveness and be reduced simply to the application of ready-made formulae. The delight of chess creativity will never be extinguished!

No matter how widely and comprehensively the chess laws and principles are worked out, the concrete creative approach to any problem or position will always be of decisive importance. Without it, we cannot so much as establish:

- a) which laws – maxims, principles, rules – are valid in a given, specific case; and
- b) how these theoretical notions are to be applied in practice.

Furthermore it must be borne in mind that with the appearance of new chess facts and discoveries, many of the established theoretical propositions will be modified or lose their force. Thus for example in the Sicilian Defence it was long considered to be very bad for Black to allow c2-c4, since White would obtain a strong position in the centre.

Diagram 113



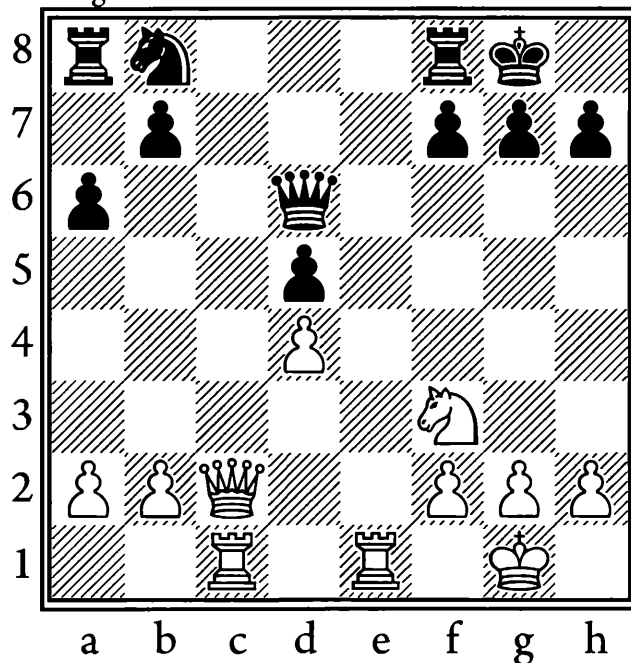
Subsequently however it became clear that c2-c4 is not dangerous for Black, as he is able to carry out the freeing advance d6-d5.

It seems to me that in the light of what has just been discussed, something more should be done to clarify what is wrong with the dogmatic method of solving various problems in chess. The essence of chess dogmatism is not only that (1) the established rules are applied in isolation from the circumstances, without regard for all the concrete peculiarities of the position. There is the further point that (2) *the evaluation of a specific position tends to be based on nothing other than those laws and directives which are obvious, familiar and already established*; there is no attempt to ascertain whether these obvious pointers are of central relevance the position in question, or are merely ancillary (since some other pointers, though less obvious, are decisive).

Thus the dogmatic approach to chess positions is a particularly superficial approach, incapable of disclosing all the immense diversity of possibilities inherent in the game.

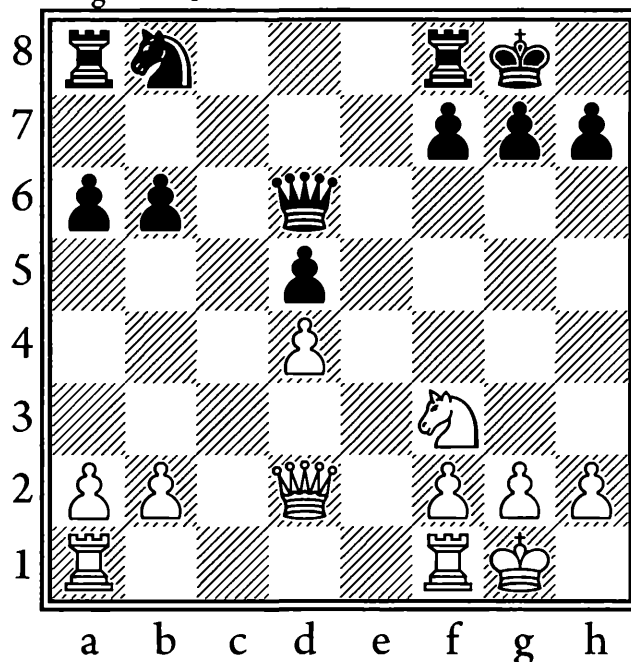
Let us now consider some examples.

Diagram 114



It is Black to move. White's better development and his open files are a key feature of the position. Yet the position cannot be judged as won for him. There are no weaknesses in Black's camp; by playing ♖b8-c6 he can shut off the c-file and cover White's entry point on e7.

Diagram 115



In this diagram (with Black to play), the key feature is the weakening of Black's queenside.

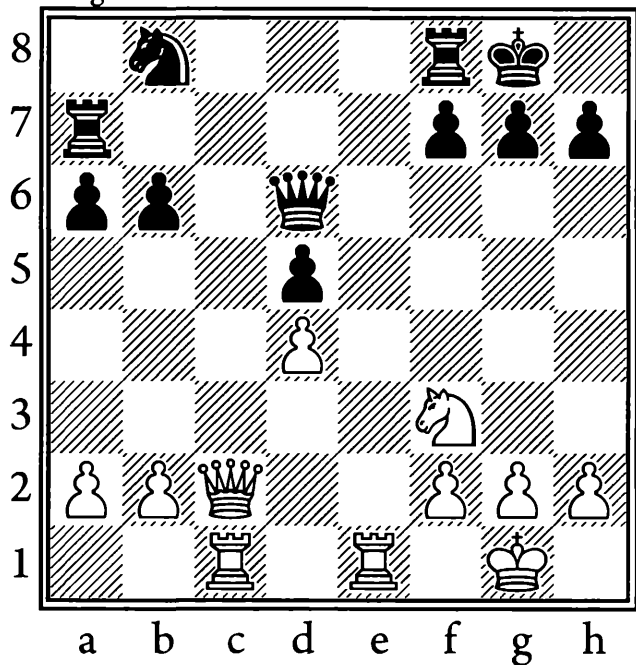
Yet once again the situation cannot be called difficult for him. White does not possess the open files and lead in development which would enable him to exploit these weaknesses.

We can see that it is pointless to consider this or that positional factor in isolation from the specific circumstances on the board. Now let's examine a position where these features favouring White were present in conjunction.

M. Botvinnik – A. Alekhine

Amsterdam 1938

Diagram 116



Assessing the above position, it is easy to see that the serious weaknesses in Black's camp make it impossible for him to stop his opponent from penetrating on the open files (the move ♖b8-c6 is unavailable). Black's position is already lost.

Thus the verdict on this situation is based on two positional factors that we know about: open files for White in conjunction with weaknesses on the black side. *Both these factors serve to define the essence of the position; they are both in White's favour.*

The continuation was:

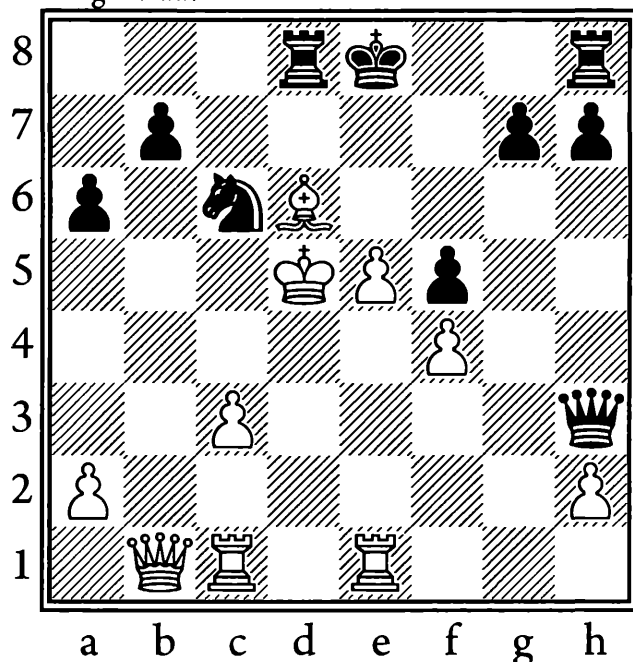
19...♖e7 20.♖xe7 ♔xe7 21.♔c7! ♔xc7 22.♖xc7 f6! 23.♔f1 ♖f7 24.♖c8† ♖f8 25.♖c3! g5 26.♔e1 h5 27.h4!, and White won on the 51st move.

Botvinnik's concluding note to this game is highly characteristic:

"The difficult thing about playing this kind of game is not of course the complexity of the calculations but the task of correctly evaluating the resulting position when you are calculating."

In the light of the above arguments, let's take another look at some examples we have seen already.

Diagram 117



The obvious feature of the position is the white king in the centre.

It is known from the experience of many games that a king in the centre of the board in the middlegame is very much at risk. On the basis of this, the chess dogmatist proclaims a maxim: in the middlegame a king in the centre is always badly placed. Subsequently, when working out variations in practical play, he rejects those in which his king lands in the centre, as he blindly believes in the established rule.

Taking the creative approach to this same position, we may start by reasoning as follows. In the middlegame the position of a king in the centre is not dangerous in itself but only

because the opponent can usually organize a strong attack against it. When that is the case, the general chess law operates: shelter your king.

As particular instances of this law we can mention the danger to a king in the centre of the board, the danger to a king on the flank in the absence of pawn cover, etc. But as I have stressed already, *the validity of any chess laws and maxims is wholly dependent on the concrete circumstances. What are the circumstances here?*

From a concrete study of the situation we can see that the position of the white king in the centre is not contravening the law about sheltering the king, since Black is unable to mount an attack against it.

It follows that the king in the centre is merely an obvious feature of the position, but not the overriding one.

The main, overriding feature is the following:

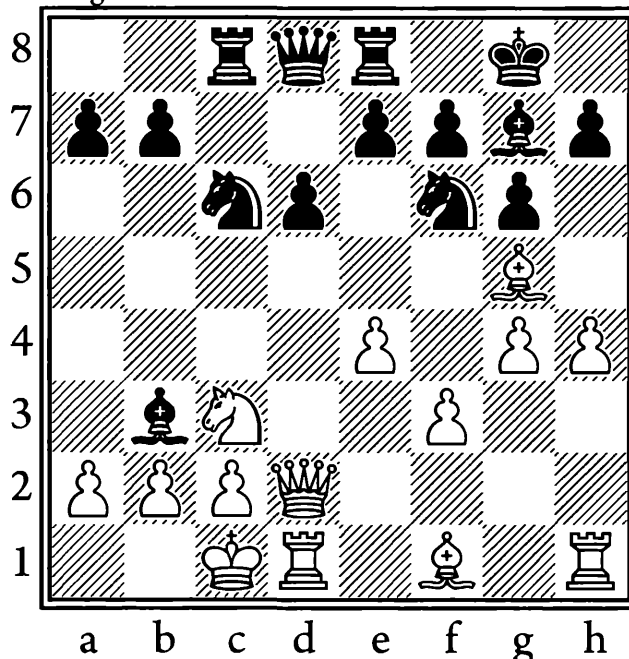
- (a) White's pieces are active, they have open lines at their disposal.
- (b) Black's pieces are constricted; they cannot break out into open space.

For the moment the king on d5 is preventing White from organizing the decisive attack. But once the king is removed from the centre, the position will be hopeless for Black.

It should not astonish us that this positioning of the king occurred in a game by Chigorin, to whom chess dogmatism was absolutely foreign.

Now another example. How should White handle the next position?

Diagram 118



(a) The superficial, dogmatic decision: White must capture towards the centre with $a2xb3$, since $c2xb3?$ would open up the king, which is on the same file as the black rook. Besides, after $c2xb3?$ Black would be left with an easily won king-and-pawn endgame if all the pieces were exchanged.

Therefore, $a2xb3!$.

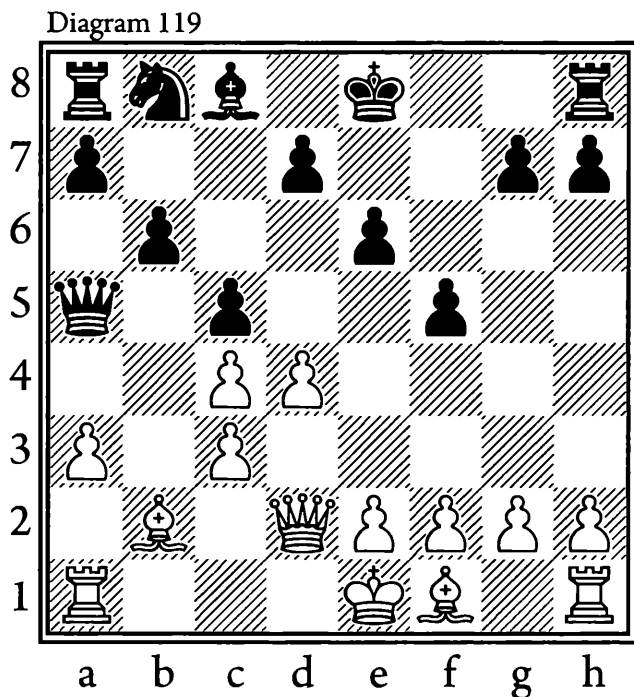
(b) The concrete, creative decision: in this position the chief, determining principle is the all-out attack on opposite wings. In the event of $13.axb3?$ $\text{♟}b4!$, threatening $\text{♞}d8-a5$, Black obtains an extremely strong attack. On the other hand after $13.cxb3!$ Black's attack is very hard to develop, despite the placing of the rook and king opposite each other. (For example: $13...\text{♟}b4$ $14.\text{♞}b1!$)

White for his part will be able to continue his successful storming of the opponent's king-side. In these circumstances Black's extra pawn in the centre has no special significance.

So $a2xb3$, and not $c2xb3$, is correct. This is not only the concrete, creative solution to the problem, but a solution in keeping with certain specific chess principles which play the central role here and can be expressed something like this: *with sharp attacks on opposite wings, success depends on your ability to combine*

your own offensive on one wing with the essential prophylactic measures on the other.

Let's consider one more example of a concrete, creative decision.



White has a bishop out of play on b2, and his pawn on c4 is weak. With his last move 10...b7-b6, Black has clearly defined his plan – pressure against the c4-pawn by means of ♖c8-a6, ♔a5-a4, ♜b8-c6-a5. With superficial play White could end up in trouble.

Can he provoke a move that would benefit him, namely c5xd4?

Concretely weighing up the features of the position, White played **11.g4!!**. This move abruptly changes the scenery. Black cannot now think about besieging the c4-pawn. For instance 11...♙a6 would lose to 12.gxf5!, when both replies are bad: 12...exf5 13.♔e3†!, or 12...♙xc4 13.♙g2 ♜c6 14.fxe6 etc.

Threats have unexpectedly arisen, and they urgently compel Black to switch over to calculating specific variations. In the first place the obvious moves are 11...♙b7 and 11...fxg4. Possible lines are 11...♙b7 12.d5 (or 12.♞g1) 12...0-0 13.gxf5 exf5 14.♞g1, and 11...fxg4 12.♞g1 (12.♙g2) with a dangerous initiative for White.

11.g2-g4!! sets Black some serious problems. Yet this move would scarcely enter the head of a player dominated by dogmatic concepts. After all, it contradicts such rules as:

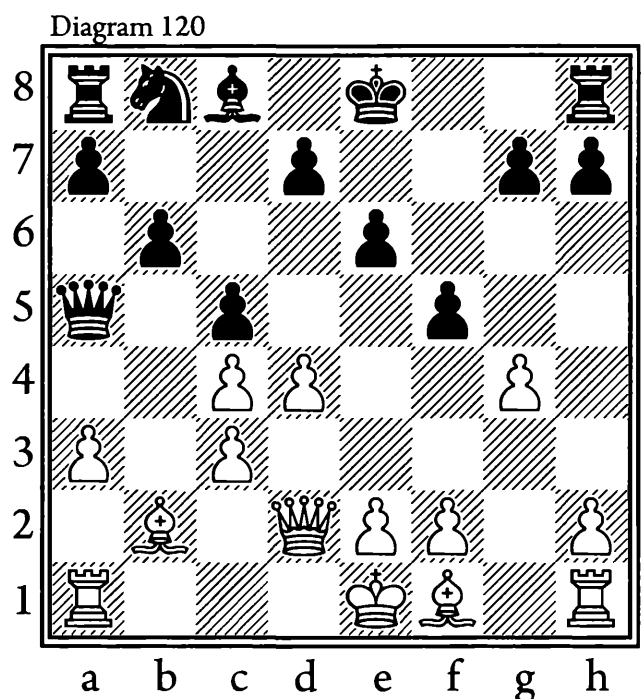
- (1) “Develop as fast as you can.”
- (2) “Don’t go in for unprepared attacks.”
- (3) “Don’t weaken your own king’s shelter,” etc.

Blindly adhering to these rules, a dogmatist in the diagrammed position would probably play 11.e3 and afterwards wonder why “correct” play had brought him to a dead end.

But the whole point is that in this position, the theoretical rules I have just quoted are by no means the crucial, overriding ones, so it would be a mistake for White to base his play on them.

11.g2-g4!! is an example of the purely creative handling of a position. But then isn’t this concrete, creative decision in conflict with chess principles? Definitely not!

Let’s consider the situation in the diagram below:



The concrete peculiarities of this position are as follows:

(1) Most of the black pieces are on the queenside; for the moment the queen is the only one in play.

(2) Black's kingside is devoid of piece protection.

Obviously in such conditions it is very much in White's interest to begin a sharp skirmish on the kingside, where he can immediately concentrate the actions of some of his pieces. Adopting the concrete approach to this position, we can see, then, that the following chess law is of maximum effectiveness, authority and significance here: *strike a blow at the most vulnerable point in your opponent's position*.

White's 11.g2-g4!! is in full conformity with this law, enabling him to open lines and proceed at once to a kingside attack. To avoid being crushed Black will have to reply **11...cxd4!**, but this is just what White was working towards when he played g2-g4, since he wants to undouble his c-pawns and bring his bishop on b2 to life. After **12.cxd4!** (stronger than 12.gxf5 dxc3! 13.♙xc3 ♖xf5) **12...♖xd2† 13.♙xd2 fxg4 14.♗g1 h5 15.h3! gxh3 16.♙xh3**, Black is in great difficulties.

Take another look at some of the examples in the chapter on "Mobilizing the Pieces": the games Korchnoi – Flohr (page 63) and Keres – Lipnitsky (page 69). There too you will see that the concrete, creative decision offended against one chess law ("deploy your forces as fast as possible") in the interests of following another one ("fight for the centre!").

To sum up, we may say that the correct assessment of a position is inconceivable without probing deeply into its content – without specific attention to its obvious and, especially, its concealed factors. A concrete, creative decision is not at all a denial of chess generalities, since the rejection of some laws and maxims – which are often obvious ones – is counterbalanced by the affirmation of others which perhaps are more covert.

Chapter 8

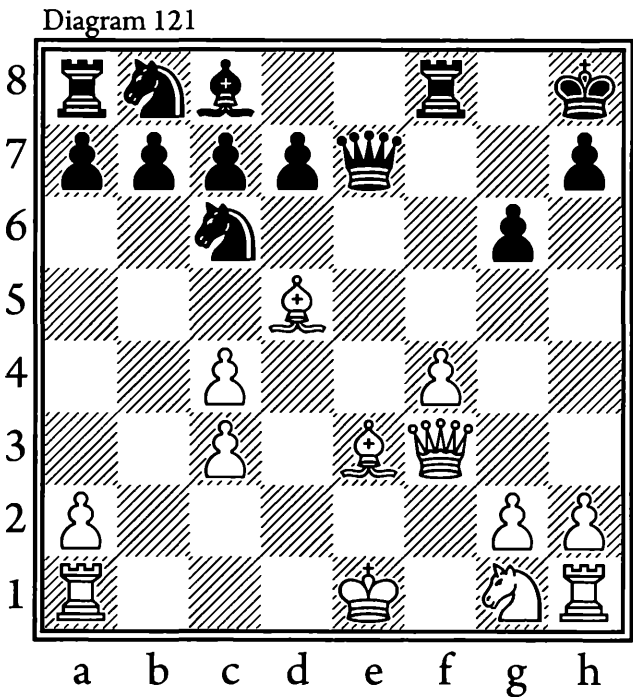
From Critical Positions to Settled Positions

We may agree to divide all chess positions into two categories: “critical” and “settled” positions. *Settled positions are those which can be assessed according to a number of positional factors without any additional calculation of variations.*

I shall clarify this notion by taking some positions from Alekhine’s games as examples. They are subject to evaluation on the basis of their positional features.

A. Alekhine – J. Seitz

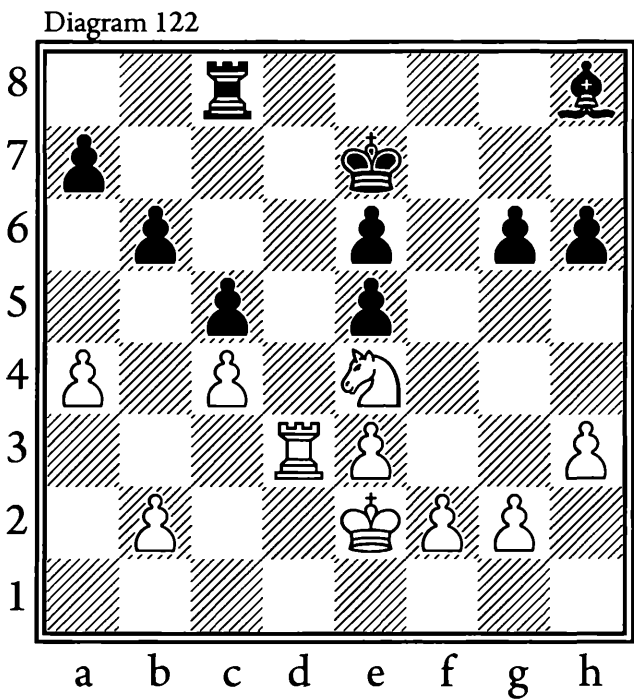
Hastings 1925



Black’s position is hopeless in view of the incurable weakness of his kingside. He resigned after seven more moves.

A. Alekhine – M. Euwe

London 1922

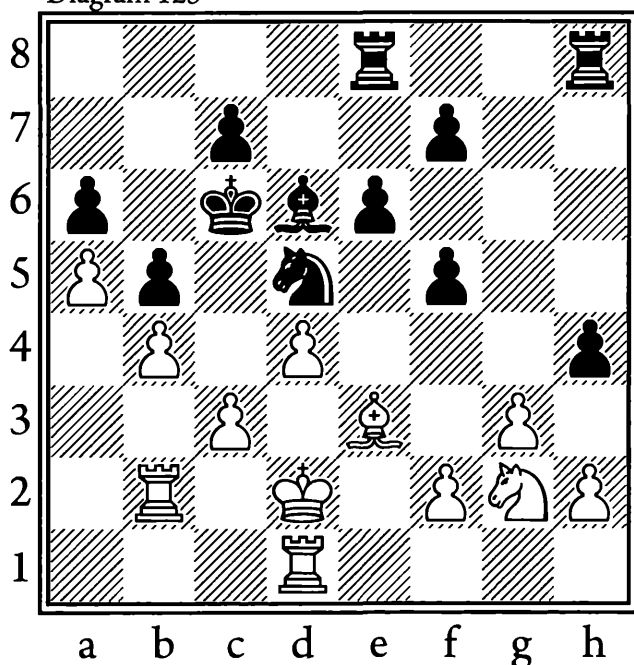


The white knight’s clear positional superiority over the black bishop, together with the doubled pawns on the e-file, means that White has a huge advantage.

J. Mieses – A. Alekhine

Baden-Baden 1925

Diagram 123

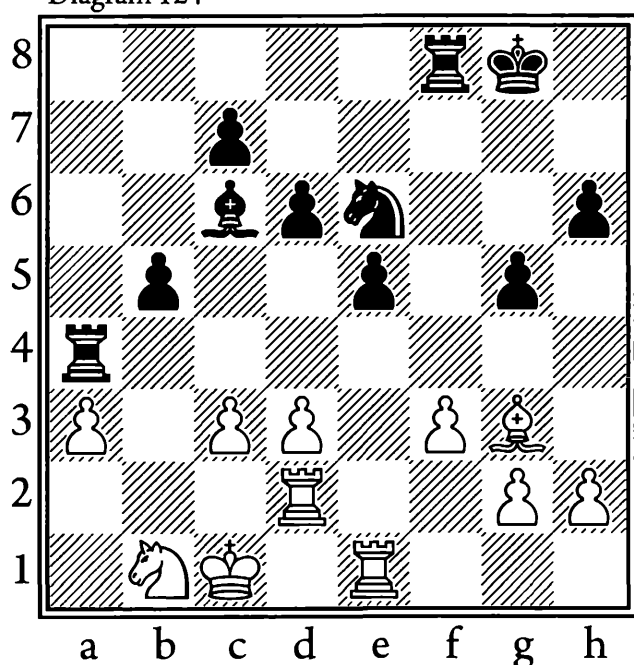


Black has an undoubted positional plus. White has a “bad” bishop on e3, weak light squares and a passive position for all his pieces. Black has the possibility of breaking through with his king on the light squares, or with his rooks on the h- and g-files.

The next two examples are from games by Botvinnik (11th USSR Ch., Leningrad 1939). To assess these situations, positional concepts are again adequate by themselves.

G. Lisitsyn – M. Botvinnik

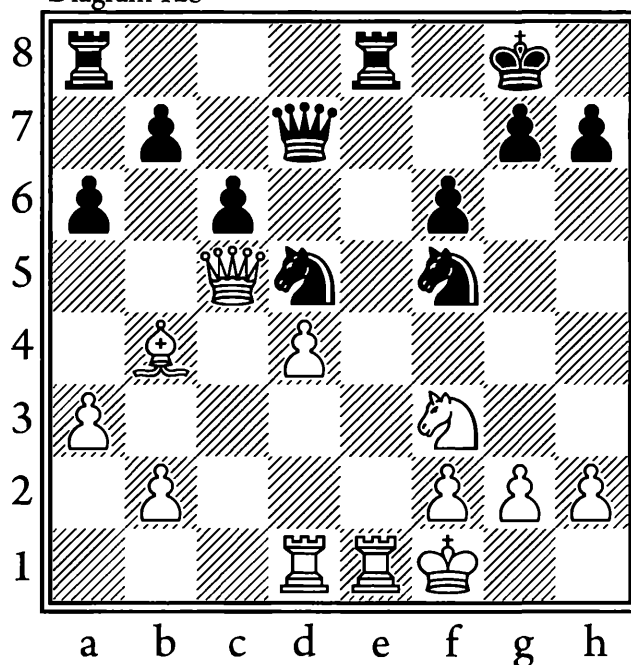
Diagram 124



The positional advantage is on Black’s side. All his pieces and pawns are excellently placed. White’s pawn position is disrupted and his pieces are huddled together on the first three ranks.

V. Makogonov – M. Botvinnik

Diagram 125



Blockading the isolated pawn on d4, Black has the advantage.

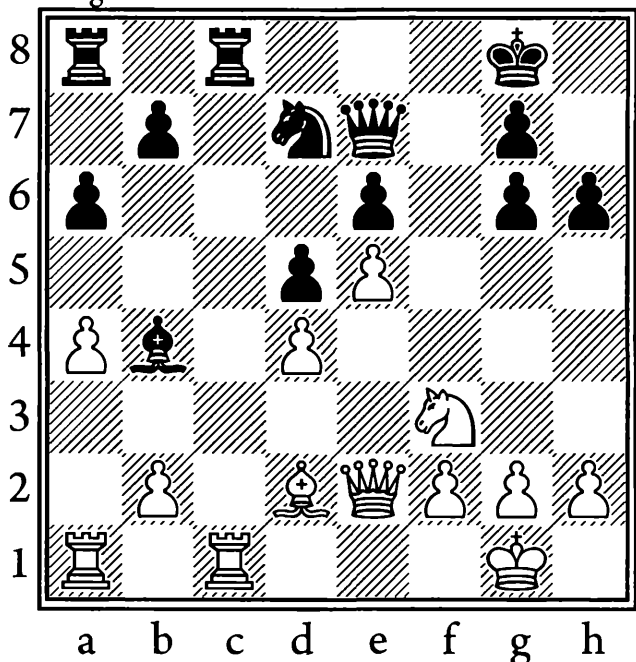
It must not be thought that a necessary characteristic of a “settled” position is an advantage for one side or the other. Plenty of settled positions could be cited where the game is in a state of balance. We will confine ourselves to looking at one of them.

I. Boleslavsky – V. Smyslov

Zurich 1953

(See diagram next page)

Diagram 126



The position has settled down. Each player is compelled to keep his rook on the c-file, so as not to concede it to the opponent. In view of the complete equilibrium, a draw was agreed.

The foregoing examples show that in evaluating “settled” positions, the calculation of variations plays a secondary, subordinate role, conceding the central place to various positional factors.

It is a much more complicated matter to evaluate positions which have not assumed a settled character. It is these unclear, as yet unsettled, positions that I propose to call *critical*.

The vast majority of positions that a chessplayer encounters fall within the “critical” category. To assess a critical position correctly and disclose its content, positional considerations alone are inadequate. A position of this kind has to be subjected to diligent analysis – in other words, you have to resort to calculating a range of variations. Analysis permits you to envisage the various ways in which the position may develop further. It is only after studying the dynamics of a critical position that you can judge it correctly and select an effective plan or move.

Thus, the true evaluation of a critical position is very largely dependent on analysis. On the

other hand, analysis itself means evaluating the positions that arise one after the other in the process of calculating variations. A kind of closed circle is formed: *analysis leans on evaluation, and evaluation flows from analysis*. Is this logically understandable?

Any process of cognition – in chess or elsewhere – takes place with the aid of analysis and synthesis, which complement each other and are closely interlinked. Engels wrote that, “Thought consists equally in resolving the objects of perception into their elements, and in uniting interrelated elements into a whole. Without analysis there is no synthesis.”

It is perfectly natural that in chess too, analysis and synthesis go hand in hand. It is true that chess terminology replaces the concept of synthesis with the word *evaluation*, but essentially it is the same thing.

The art of evaluation-cum-analysis is the decisive factor in a chessplayer’s practical strength.

A very important question is how far the analysis of a position needs to go. Obviously if the end position of the analysis is not a “settled” position but a new “critical” one, then the assessment of the initial position will remain unclear as before.

The goal of analysis is to arrive at a position that is not “critical” but “settled” in character.

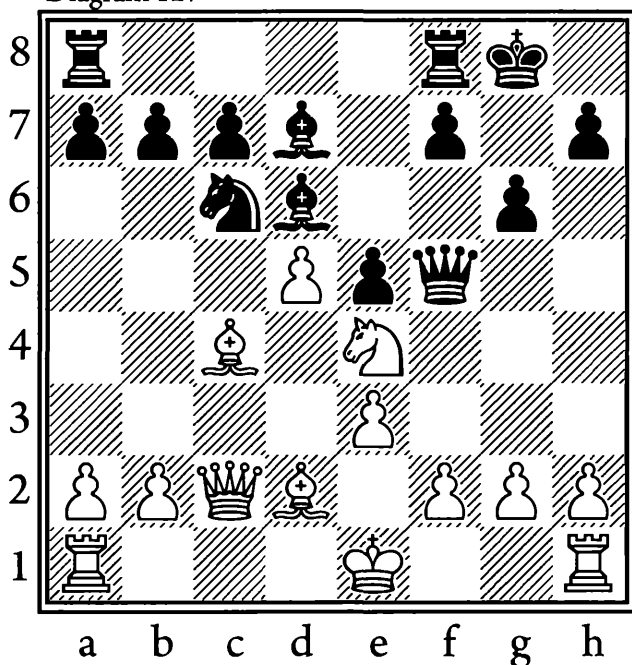
I now propose to analyse a very interesting position.

E. Eliskases – Y. Averbakh

Stockholm 1952

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
5.♙a4† ♘c6 6.e3 ♙d7 7.♙c2 0–0 8.♙d2
dxc4 9.♙xc4 ♙d6 10.♘g5 e5 11.♘d5 g6
12.♘xf6† ♙xf6 13.♘e4 ♙f5 14.d5!

Diagram 127



Let us try to evaluate this critical position. We will start from a general “crude” appraisal. The vanguard location of the black queen is most unattractive: as well as depriving the f-pawn of the chance to advance two squares, the queen is cut off from the queenside where important events may take place.

White can create various threats to trap the queen, especially considering that the bishop on d7 is blocking its retreat and that with a white knight on e4, the weakness of the f6-square is palpable.

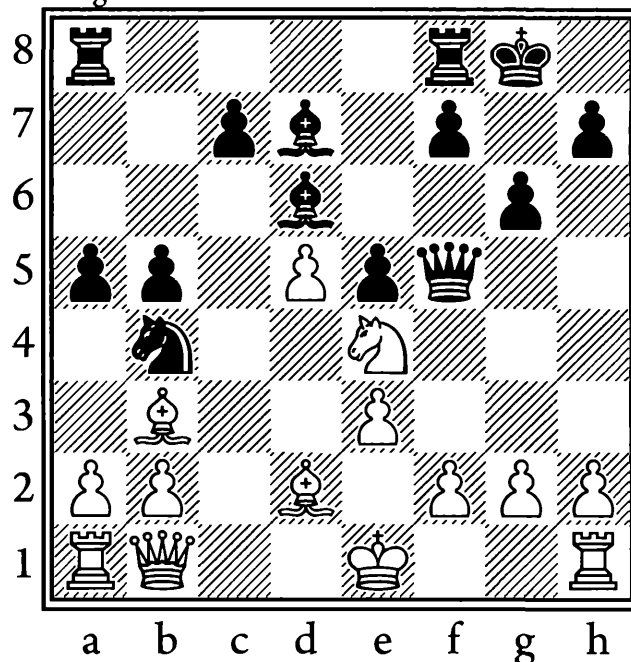
Thus the queen on f5 is, so to speak, sitting on a powder keg, and Black constantly needs to make sure that his opponent cannot light the fuse. And since he has no visible advantages in return, this suggests the overall verdict that Black’s last move was bad, placing his own position under threat.

Now let us proceed to the second, more difficult stage – subjecting the position to a concrete investigation. The attacked knight on e4 is defended by the white queen, which may in turn come under attack and has only one square to retreat to – after which Black can press ahead with a queenside offensive.

Does this amount to adequate compensation for Black? When playing 13...♔f5, Averbakh

probably thought it did. So let us give this critical position (we will refer to it as critical position number 1) a close analysis, starting with 14...♘b4 15.♙b1 b5 16.♙b3 a5.

Diagram 128

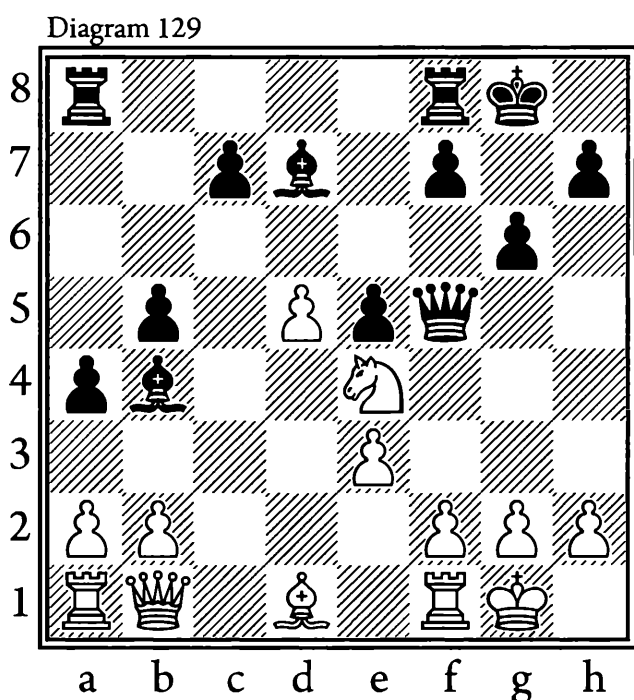


Black’s plan is now clarified. He threatens to drive the white bishop from b3 in order to win the d5-pawn, liberating his queen at the same time. For example, 17.0–0 a4 18.♙d1 ♘xd5, and now 19.♙g4 is unplayable, since after 19...♙xg4 the f6-square is defended by the black knight.

When Averbakh played 13...♔f5 he probably foresaw the diagram position, which we will call critical position number 2. Since it has arisen by force from critical position number 1, it is extremely important for us to give it an accurate concrete assessment.

In the first place, the natural thing is to look at how the situation was handled by the players themselves. The game went 17.0–0 a4 18.♙xb4 axb3 19.♙xd6 cxd6 20.f3 g5 21.axb3, with an extra pawn and significant winning chances for White. If these moves are obligatory, we may say that 13...♔f5 *was* bad, as it leads by force to a difficult position. But *are* they obligatory? On move 18, why didn’t Black play 18...♙xb4?

During the game, as it later emerged, Averbakh felt that Black's position would be lost after the reply 19.♔d1!.



Indeed, in this critical position number 3, which both players must have envisaged in their calculations, White has the dangerous threats of 20.g4 and 20.♔g4!, winning the queen. (The former can be played in answer to 19...♔g7, and the latter in answer to 19...♔e8.)

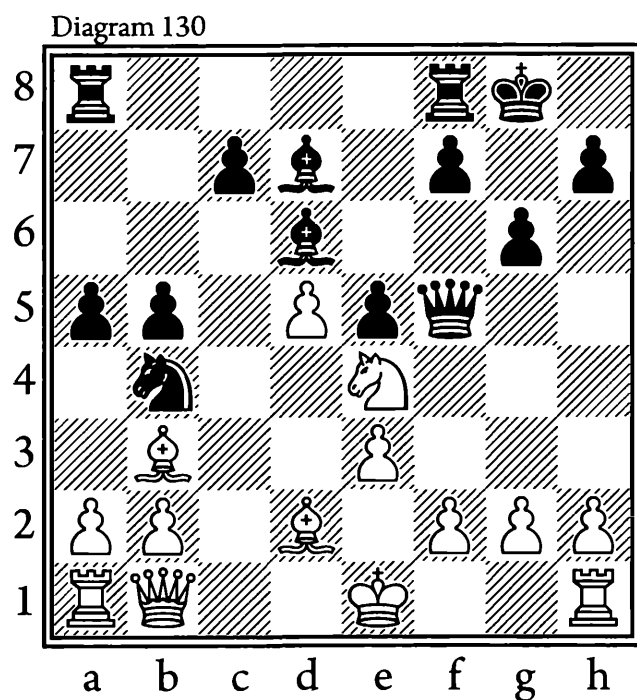
However, in his analysis after the game, Averbakh found an adequate defence for Black – 19...h5!, with these variations:

(a) 20.h3 ♔e8! 21.g4 ♔c8, and now 22.gxh5 would fail to 22...♔xh3.

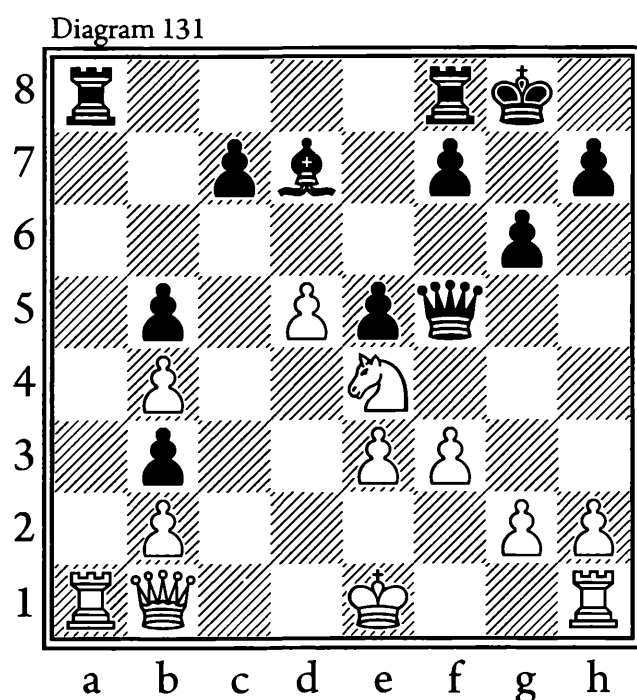
(b) 20.g4 hxg4 21.h3 gxh3 22.♔h2 ♔g7 23.♔g1; now after 24.♔g4 White will finally win the queen, but Black will obtain sufficient compensation for it.

And since 19.♔c2 (instead of 19.♔d1) does not give White any advantage either, in view of 19...♔c8!, it follows that 18...♔xb4! would have ensured Black equal chances. Can we now say that 13...♔f5 was not a bad move and did not risk losing the game? Before answering this question, we need to decide *whether White could have played more strongly*. Let's go back to

critical position number 2.



I suggest that instead of 17.0–0 White can play 17.a3! a4 (the only move; 17...♔a6 loses to 18.♔c2!) 18.♔xb4 (but not 18.♔xd6 ♔d3†! 19.♔e2 ♔xf2†! 20.♔xd3 cxd6, when Black has a dangerous attack for the piece; he threatens axb3, e4† and ♔f5†) 18...♔xb4† 19.axb4 axb3 20.f3!.



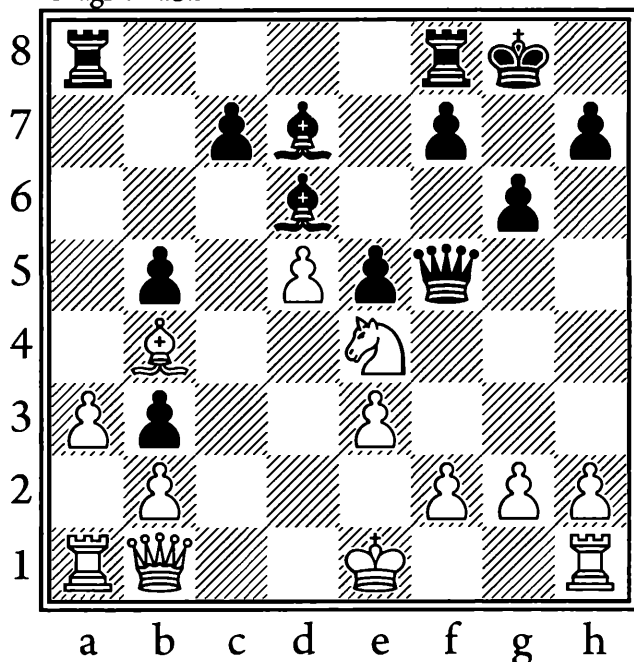
This position is not critical, it has become settled; and a settled position is what we try to arrive at when analysing. After the exchange of two pairs of minor pieces, the queen on f5 and bishop on d7 remain misplaced from the action.

For example: 20...♔g7 21.0–0 h5 (21...♖xa1 22.♚xa1 ♕e8 is not attractive either: 23.♚a7 ♖c8 24.♖c1, and Black is in a bad way) 22.♖c1, and it is hard for Black to defend his many weaknesses on the queenside. The pawns stacked up on the b-file are picturesque.

White, then, has the advantage.

On the basis of this analysis, can we finally condemn Black's 13...♚f5? To give a satisfactory and fully substantiated answer, there is one more line that we need to investigate carefully. After 17.a3! a4 18.♕xb4!, Black has 18...axb3, sacrificing a pawn.

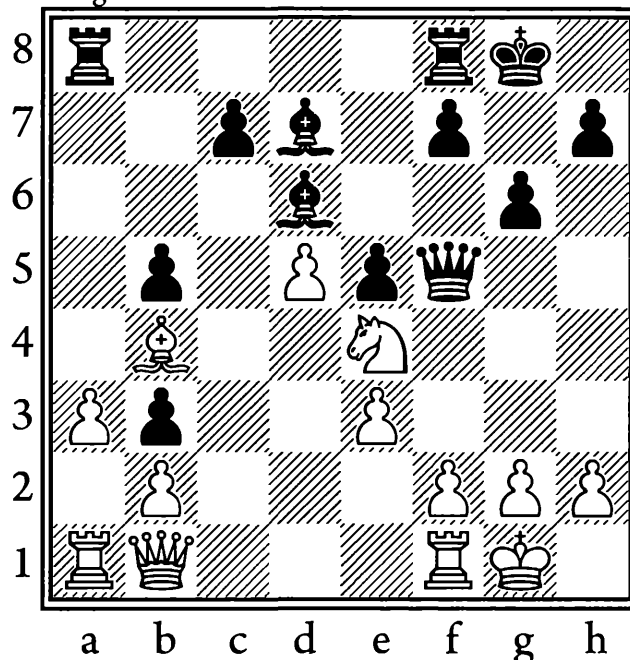
Diagram 132



Critical position number 4 arises. Playing to win the pawn is not good for White, for instance 19.♕xd6 cxd6 20.♕xd6 ♖fc8 and Black threatens to invade on c2. Or 19.♕xd6 cxd6 20.♕xd6 ♚g5!, when 21.0–0 fails to 21...♕h3, while 21.♚e4 is well answered by 21...♚e7, to “fish out” the white knight.

However, if White refrains from the immediate win of a pawn and plays 19.0–0! (19.f3! is also good), a fairly “settled” position comes about.

Diagram 133



White has a strong knight on e4 as before, and threatens to win a pawn on d6. The black queen on f5 remains out of play. It is threatened with 20.f3 and 21.g4 – for instance 19...♕xb4 20.f3! etc.

Although this analysis is not exhaustive, we can nonetheless say that after 13...♚f5 the initiative and the advantage are with White. Do we now finally have sufficient grounds for condemning 13...♚f5 as a bad move?

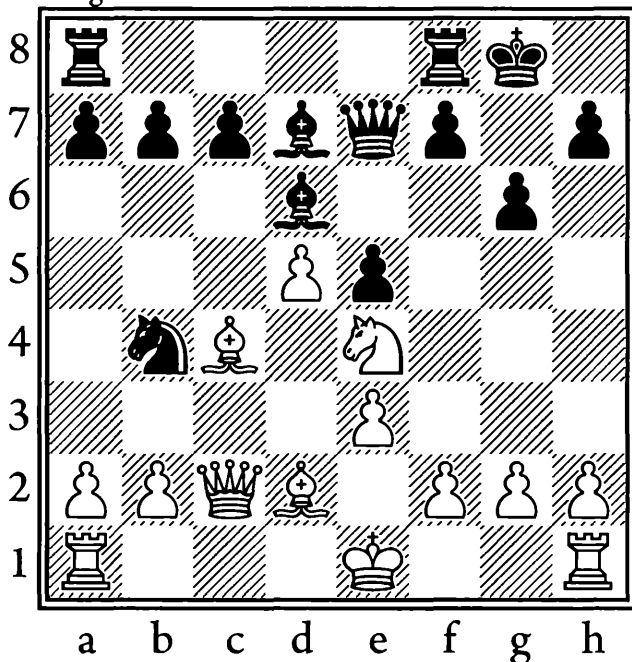
Actually we still do not. The matter is by no means so simple. We first need to determine whether 13...♚f5 was just “the least of the evils”. Isn't it conceivable that other moves were even worse?

Let's go back to the position before 13...♚f5 and look at some other possibilities.

(a) 13...♚e7 14.d5 (probably best), and now rather than 14...♕d8 Black plays the more active 14...♕b4!.

(See diagram next page)

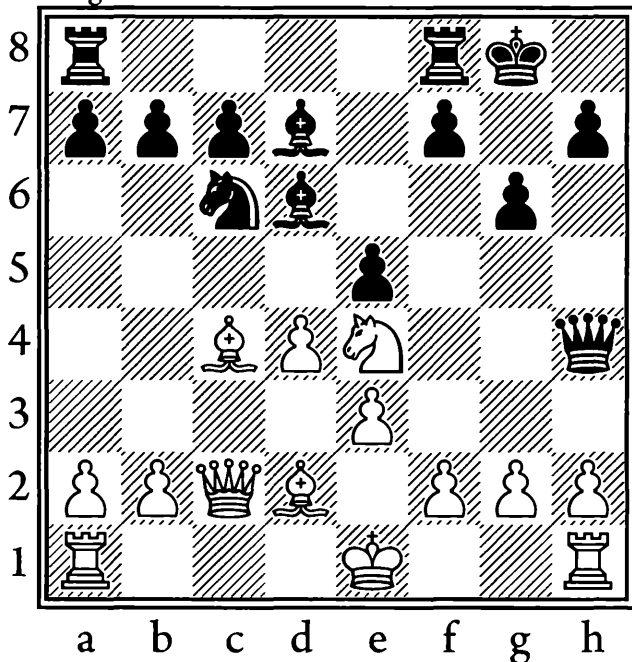
Diagram 134



15. ♖b3 (other moves with the white queen are not better) 15... a5! (15... ♕f5 16. ♖xd6 ♖c2† does not work on account of 17. ♕e2 ♖xd6 18. ♖ac1, and White acquires a material plus) 16. ♖xd6 (the immediate 16. a3 is met by 16... a4! and 17... ♖a6) 16... ♖xd6! 17. a3 ♖a6 18. ♕xa5 ♖c5. Black now regains his pawn after either 19. ♖c3 ♖a4 or 19. ♕b4 ♖xb3 20. ♕xd6 ♖xa1 21. ♕xf8 ♖c2†! (but not 21... ♕xf8 22. ♕d2!) 22. ♕d2 ♖xe3! etc., and remains with an equal game.

(b) Instead of 13... ♖e7 at once, Black has an interesting and perhaps even stronger move in 13... ♖h4.

Diagram 135



The aim is to answer 14. d5 with 14... ♕f5, and 14. g3 with 14... ♖e7.

Without going into a detailed analysis of 13... ♖e7 and 13... ♖h4, we may say that they leave Black with equal chances.

It is only now, after comparing the results we obtained from 13... ♖f5 and 13... ♖e7 or 13... ♖h4, that we can draw a definitive conclusion: 13... ♖f5 *was* bad. It was the cause of Black's subsequent difficulties in this game.

Our analysis can now be formulated with the aid of conventional signs, as follows: 13... ♖f5? (13... ♖e7! or 13... ♖h4!) 14. d5! ♖b4! 15. ♖b1! b5! 16. ♕b3! a5! 17. a3! (17. 0–0?, as played in Eliskases – Averbakh, is weaker, because after 17... a4 18. ♕xb4 Black could have equalized by 18... ♕xb4! 19. ♕d1! h5! etc. instead of 18... axb3?) 17... a4 18. ♕xb4!, and White obtains the advantage after either 18... ♕xb4† 19. axb4 axb3 20. f3! or 18... axb3 19. 0–0 (19. f3).

Only as a result of this analysis can we see that our first impression – our general, “crude” judgement on the unattractiveness of 13... ♖f5 – has been upheld. We may suppose that on general considerations Averbakh would probably have rejected this move; in playing it, he was relying on concrete analysis which, however, contained an error.

The above example shows how complex the analysis of a chess position is. When analysing at home, moving the pieces about, we can examine variations any number of moves deep. When playing under tournament conditions, with the additional factor of limited thinking time, the matter is a good deal more complicated. In such conditions the analysis needs to be fast, precise and as far-reaching as is possible. It is perfectly obvious that when calculating variations we need to show a high degree of tactical alertness, that is, to see the various combinative threats.

Losing the game is the inescapable consequence of unsatisfactory analysis. Of course I am not thinking of gross blunders or losses on time. In some cases, variations have “holes” in them, that is, they contain oversights, errors. In other cases we succeed in calculating a line accurately over a long distance, but our opponent, calculating it even further, demonstrates that our evaluation at the end of the line was false.

Sometimes both players head towards the same position but differ in their assessment of it.

In view of the great complexity of chess analysis, no player has yet managed to avoid making mistakes in both his tournament play and his study of the game at home. Chigorin, for example, wrote, “Hardly anyone is in a position to judge whether a game was played ‘correctly’, that is, whether at each juncture the move played was the best or just as strong as any others that would have led to the same result.” (Quoted from the *New Time* newspaper, 1900)

Mistakes in analysis are only partly exposed by the opponent or another chess analyst. The majority of mistakes remain wholly unnoticed because the games are not analysed in sufficient depth. The result of this is that games of chess are constantly being elucidated in a most superficial way which only misleads the reader.

For this very reason Chigorin, Alekhine, Capablanca, Botvinnik and other distinguished players, exceedingly strict in their own analyses, have made several apt comments on the unsatisfactory quality of the annotations to many a game. We may recall that in the same *New Time* newspaper, giving a game Lasker – Sheffield which was taken from the German magazine *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, Chigorin wrote that: “There were four notes to the game in all – and not one of them was correct!” In the *New Time* chess column Chigorin remarked, not without irony:

“An annotator in a games collection observes that the right move is such-and-such. The professor annotators themselves know no more about the ‘right’ moves than their first-year pupils.”

In the book of *The 11th USSR Chess Championship, Leningrad 1939*, recommending that the best way of trying to overcome low-quality analysis was to annotate games, Botvinnik wrote:

“Of course, when notes to games are ‘dashed off’ in one or two hours, they can in no way qualify as analysis. Such ‘analysis’ plays a wholly negative role, as it can become a bad habit. Unfortunately some of our players still take a disdainful attitude to home analysis.”

The following statement by Capablanca in his book *My Chess Career* is not without interest either:

“Games are very often annotated by unknown players who have insufficient understanding of the play. In actual fact, games by top-class maestros can only be annotated by a very few players. Of course even the strongest are not infallible, but the errors they make are few and infrequent, whereas others make them continually.”

It cannot be denied that a genuine master’s commentary acquaints the reader with the hidden meaning of the events on the chessboard; it discloses and explains the players’ ideas and the errors committed in play. In this respect I would like to compare the complex and absorbing task of a chess annotator with the inspired work of an orchestral conductor. One of them deals with a game score, the other with a musical score; but with deep and intimate concern, each one strives to bring out its inner content. A game containing plenty of interest and substance (accompanied by a valid commentary revealing its distinctive artistic worth) produces a strong emotional effect on the chess reader.

On Capablanca's pronouncement that I quoted, I feel two comments are essential:

(1) It is difficult to annotate not only the games of top-class masters but also those of players whose qualifications are more modest – given that the chief aim of chess analysis is to establish the objective truth, irrespective of the strength of the players involved; and hence,

(2) the analysis of games can be carried out not just by “a few players” but also by strong amateurs, provided that they analyse deeply and skilfully.

There are numerous familiar examples of how the truth – which dozens of masters had proved powerless to find – was unearthed by an amateur previously unknown to the chess world, who had displayed more persistence, more penetration and, at times, more analytic skill. I shall give one instance of this on pages 176-77, in connection with the analysis of a well-known Alekhine – Euwe game, on which the decisive word was said by N. Goncharov, a previously obscure Moscow amateur.

The following is another example.

A. Alekhine – A. van Mindeno

Holland 1933

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 d6 4.d4 exd4 5.♙xd4 ♙d7 6.♙xc6 ♙xc6 7.♘c3 ♘f6 8.♙g5 ♙e7 9.0–0–0 0–0 10.h4 h6 11.♘d5

“A correct and exactly calculated offer which Black should not accept.” (*Here and subsequently, the notes in quotation marks are Alekhine's.*)

11...hxc5?

“Although the final point of the sacrifice was very difficult to foresee, the acceptance has to be decidedly condemned: it was obvious enough that the opening of the h-file means deadly danger.”

12.♘xe7†! ♙xe7 13.hxc5 ♘xe4

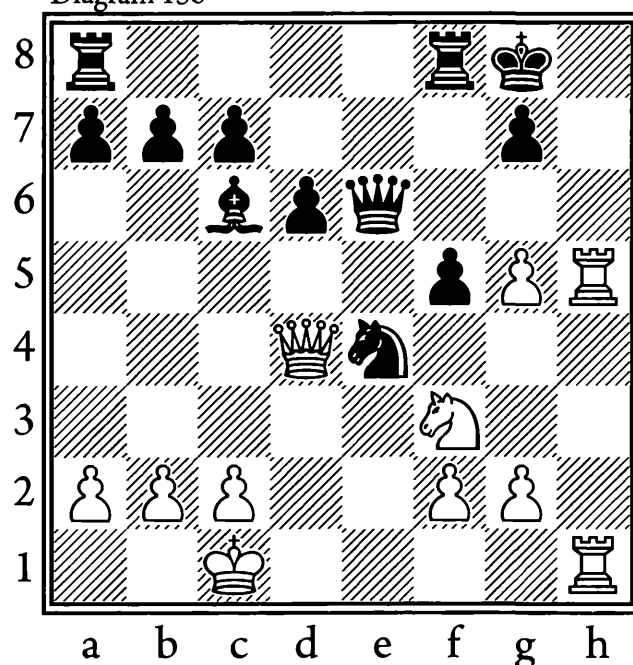
“Also after other knight's moves the doubling of rooks on the h-file would prove decisive.”

14.♙h5 ♙e6

“In case of the immediate 14...f5 White would force the win in a similar manner to the text: 15.g6 ♙e6 16.♘e5! ♘f6 17.♙h8†! ♔xh8 18.♙h4† ♔g8 19.♙h1 with an unavoidable mate.”

15.♙dh1 f5

Diagram 136



16.♘e5!!

One of Alekhine's brilliant combinations.

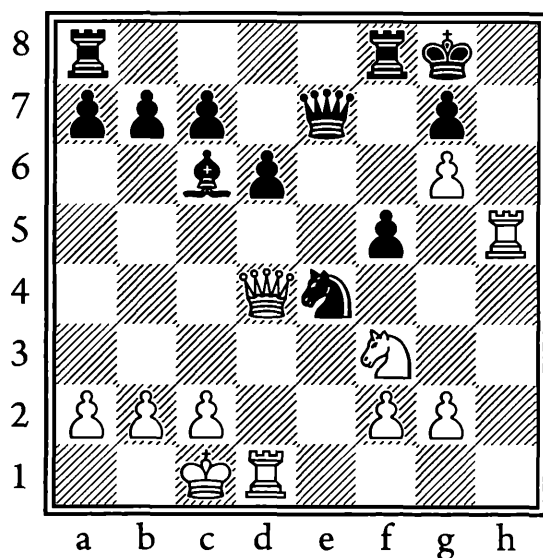
16...dxe5 17.g6

Black resigned: 17...♙xc6 18.♙c4†, and mate in three moves.

This game has been reprinted dozens of times, and Alekhine's annotations leave us in no doubt that he considered Black's position hopeless. All later authors subscribed to that opinion. But then the game was analysed by the Kiev chess enthusiast A. Eremenko, who unearthed some subtleties which had gone unnoticed, and found some possible ways for Black to defend. After 14.♙h5, he suggests Black should

play what Alekhine rejected: 14...f5!, without fearing 15.g6 (as given by Alekhine in reply). I now reproduce Eremenko's analysis.

Diagram 137

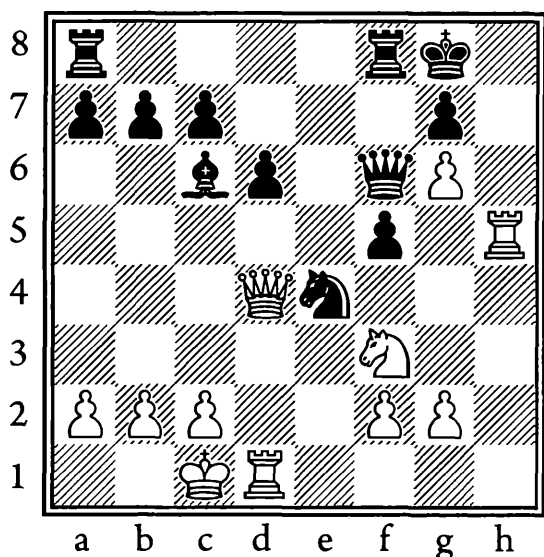


Black has two possibilities: 15...♖e6 and 15...♗f6.

(a) After 15...♖e6 16.♘e5! Black continues, not with 16...♘f6?!, but with 16...♗fe8! 17.♞dh1 ♔f8! 18.♘xc6! (better than 18.♞h8† ♔e7 19.♘xc6† ♔d7) 18...♘f6! (18...bxc6 loses to 19.♞h8† ♔e7 20.♗xg7† ♔d8 21.♞xe8† ♗xe8 22.♞h8 etc.) 19.♞h8† ♘g8. A new critical position has emerged. Black is threatening to take the knight or the pawn on g6. An attack with 20.g4!? will be refuted. The chances are about level.

(b) A considerably stronger move is 15...♗f6!.. Let's see a few variations:

Diagram 138



(b1) 16.♗c4† d5 17.♞xd5 ♗e6! 18.♞d1 (or 18.♗f1 ♗xg6!, but not 18...♗xd5?? in view of 19.♗h1, winning for White) 18...♗xc4 19.♞dh1 ♗f1†!., and by diverting the rook from h1, Black wins.

(b2) 16.♞dh1 ♗xg6 17.♗c4† (or 17.♘e5 ♗xh5! etc.) 17...d5 18.♞h8† ♔f7 19.♘e5† (or 19.♞xf8† ♔xf8 20.♞h8† ♔f7 21.♘e5† ♔f6 22.♘xg6 ♞xh8!) 19...♔f6 20.♘xg6 (or 20.♞xf8† ♔xe5! etc.) 20...♞xh8! (better than 20...dxc4, which only gives equal chances) 21.♞xh8 ♞xh8!, and by threatening mate, Black keeps a material plus.

(b3) 16.♘e5 Now Black will be mated if he takes the knight, but instead he plays 16...♞fe8!., and if 17.♞dh1 then 17...♔f8! 18.♞h8† ♔e7 and wins.

This analysis must be valued very highly, for Alekhine very rarely made analytical mistakes. Eremenko forces us to reconsider our assessment of this famous game of Alekhine's. I would draw the reader's attention to the way in which the "critical" position (after 15...♗f6!.) was turned into a number of "settled" positions as a result of the analysis.

Chapter 9

Positional Flair

I have already said that the aim of analysis is to convert “critical” positions into “settled” ones which can be evaluated on the basis of familiar positional factors. Correct understanding of the position is therefore of decisive significance for a chessplayer.

However there are many players, especially young ones, who underrate the importance of developing their positional skills, wrongly supposing that all problems can be solved through calculating variations alone. It has to be acknowledged that mastering the art of positional chess is extremely difficult, but it is imperative to work towards it if you want to progress as a player.

The basis of a player’s positional equipment can be supplied by various chess generalizations – laws, maxims, principles, rules, which apply under specific conditions.

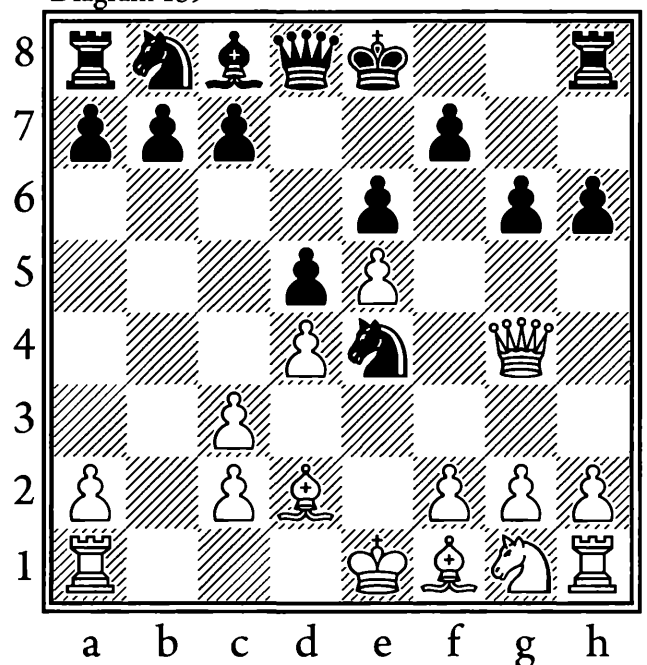
If a player studies chess seriously, then as he gains experience, certain distinct positional skills are formed. A “feel for the position”, or positional flair, evolves. We will elucidate this with examples.

In the MacCutcheon Variation of the French

Defence, the following position comes about after:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 ♙b4
5.e5 h6 6.♙d2 ♙xc3 7.bxc3 ♘e4 8.♚g4
g6

Diagram 139

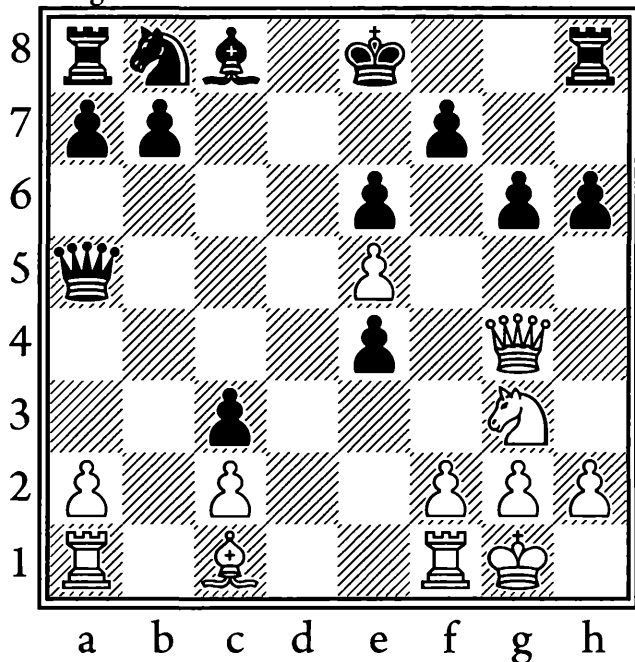


For a long time players of the white side were unable to find ways of gaining the initiative. In the search for new methods, an ancient recommendation of Grandmaster Duras was “dug up”:

9.♔c1!

It turned out that White could work up a dangerous initiative on the dark squares after either 9...♖xc3 10.♗d3 c5 11.dxc5 ♖c6 12.♗f3, or 9...c5 10.♗d3 cxd4 11.♗e2 ♔a5 12.0-0 dxc3 13.♗xe4 dxe4 14.♗g3! (see next diagram; this occurred in Boleslavsky – Lisitsyn, Moscow 1944).

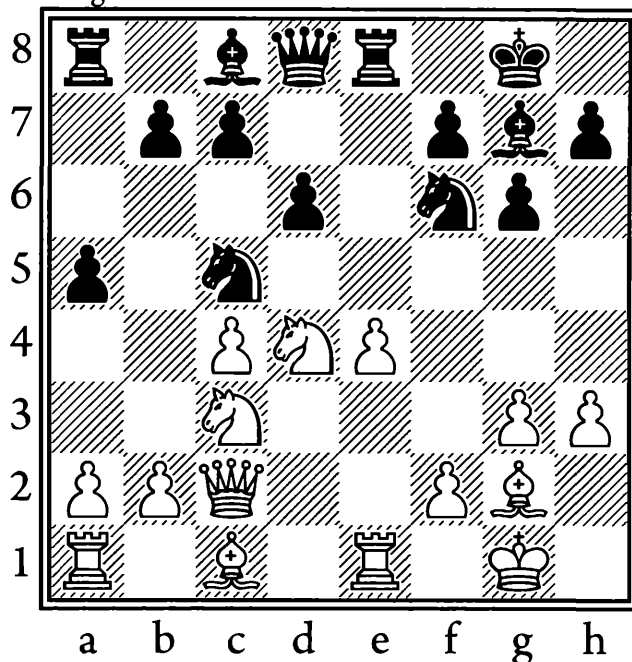
Diagram 140



Players of the black side stopped using the MacCutcheon Variation; it almost disappeared from tournament practice. Yet this line left a fruitful positional idea behind it – the possibility of a pawn sacrifice by White to exploit the drastically weakened dark squares in his opponent's camp.

To some players this idea may not seem entirely convincing. They will be thinking that White's initiative is not dangerous enough to warrant giving up the pawn. But in the further course of their chess studies, let us assume that these players come across the position in the diagram below.

Diagram 141



This position occurs frequently in master practice. It results from the following moves in the King's Indian Defence:

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♗g7 4.♗f3 0-0 5.g3 d6 6.♗g2 ♖bd7 7.0-0 e5 8.e4 exd4 9.♗xd4 ♗e8 10.h3 ♖c5 11.♗e1 a5 12.♗c2

A question may naturally arise – why do players in this position keep offering the e4-pawn, which Black declines to take. What if he *does* take it? This means playing:

12...♗fxe4 13.♗xe4 ♗xd4

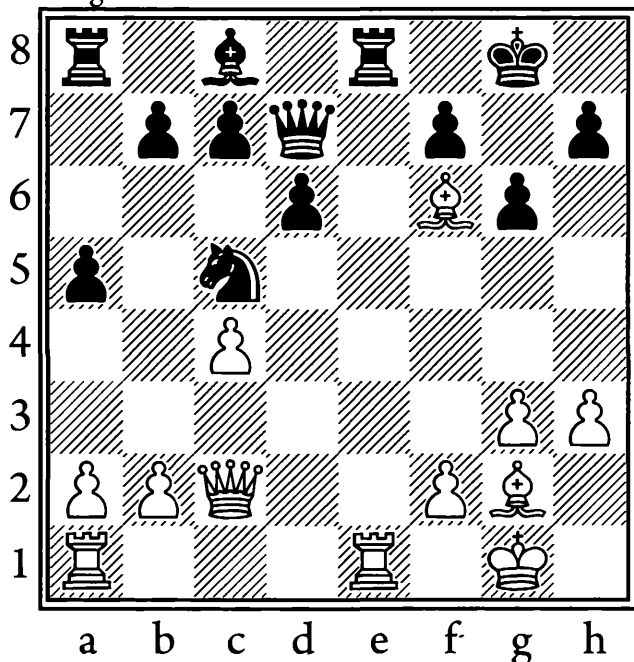
Yet the right continuation has been found:

14.♗g5! ♗d7 15.♗f6† ♗xf6 16.♗xf6

Black's organic weaknesses around his king, in the presence of White's powerful dark-squared bishop, mean that the black position is scarcely attractive. White threatens to bring his queen to h6, while Black also has his back rank to guard.

(See diagram next page)

Diagram 142



Although Black does have quite considerable defensive resources, no master player has yet been tempted to take White's pawn.

Once this example has been studied, the positional idea of sacrificing a pawn in order to weaken a complex of squares may become more comprehensible and accessible.

And then, conceivably, some players' doubts about the correctness of White's pawn sacrifice in the MacCutcheon Variation, which we considered first, will start to be dispelled.

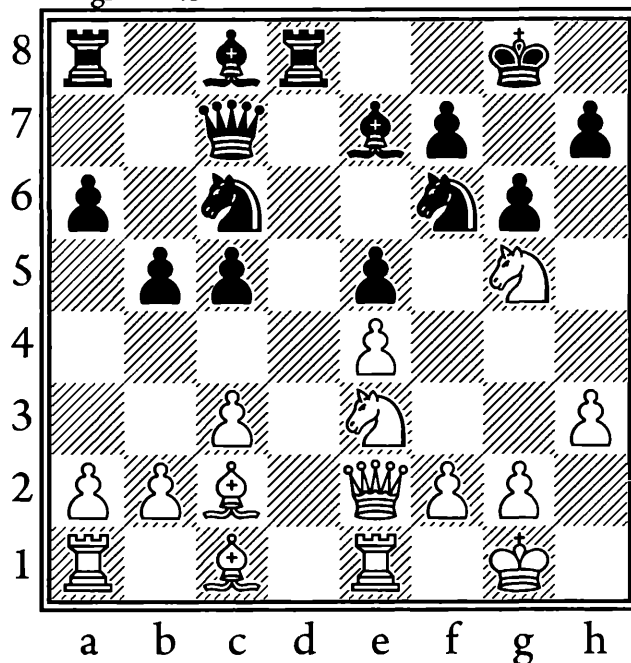
Most likely an inquiring player will want to carry out an analysis of similar pawn sacrifices in various analogous situations, to deepen his feel for the idea in question. He will improve his positional flair in the process, and may try out the same idea in practice if the opportunity arises.

In the Chigorin Variation of the Ruy Lopez, after:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.h3 ♘a5 10.♙c2 c5 11.d4 ♙c7 12.♘bd2 ♘c6 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♘f1 ♙e6 15.♘e3 ♖fd8 (15...♖ad8 is more accurate) 16.♙e2 g6 17.♘g5 ♙c8

The following position arises.

Diagram 143



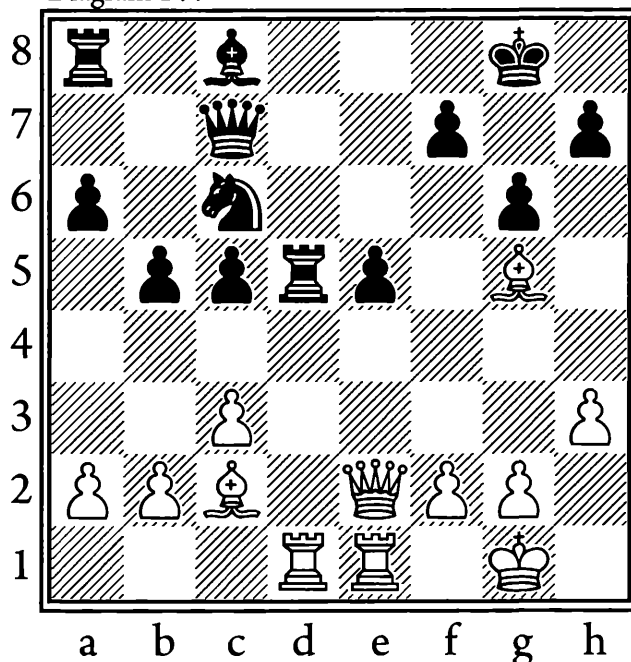
Familiarity with the positional idea of sacrificing a pawn to weaken the dark-square complex makes it easier for White to execute the following positional combination:

18.♘d5! ♘xd5 19.exd5 ♙xg5

19...♖xd5 is no better, in view of 20.♙f3 ♙e6 21.♘xe6 fxe6 22.♙g4.

20.♙xg5 ♖xd5 21.♖ad1!!

Diagram 144



In the King's Indian variation that we examined,

the white rook controlling the e-file prevented the black queen from coming to the defence of the dark squares. In this case, if Black replies 21...♖xd1, then after 22.♖xd1 the white rook on the d-file will be playing a similar role. Other moves do not help Black either. On 21...♗e6 White has 22.♖xd5 ♗xd5 23.♔d2!, occupying the dark squares with tempo; he then obtains an easily won position thanks to the threats of ♗f6 and ♔h6.

Thus the positional idea of a pawn sacrifice aimed at weakening a complex of squares brought White a quick victory here. To illustrate this kind of sacrifice I deliberately chose an example that was as complex as possible.

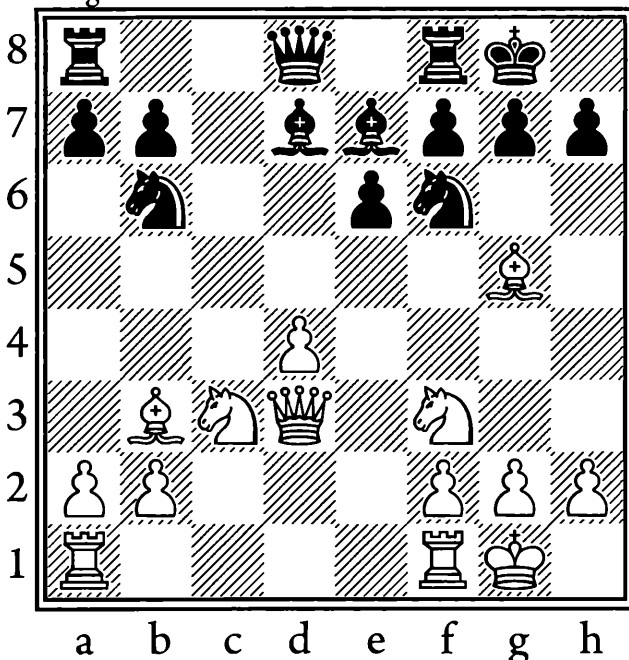
The development of a player's positional flair is helped to a great extent by studying typical positions. How this comes about, I shall try to show by looking at one such position in some detail.

M. Botvinnik – M. Vidmar

Nottingham 1936

1.c4 e6 2.♘f3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7
5.♘c3 0–0 6.e3 ♘bd7 7.♗d3 c5 8.0–0
cxd4 9.exd4 dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♘b6 11.♗b3
♗d7 12.♔d3

Diagram 145



A typical position of very widespread occurrence. White has an isolated pawn, which may constitute a strength or a weakness in his position according to circumstances. He dominates the centre, where he has a spatial advantage and more points under his control. All his pieces are actively placed for the attack; both rooks are co-operating excellently. Black is cramped, but his position is free from weaknesses. If he succeeds in fending off White's pressure and simplifying the game by exchanges, he will have a realistic chance of converting the d4-pawn from a strength of White's position into its weakness.

These strategic considerations dominate both players in the planning of their concrete actions. White is playing for an attack; Black aims, by repulsing it, to go into an advantageous ending.

The present game continued:

12...♘bd5?

Positionally, a mistaken decision, going against the above considerations. The nature of the position demanded a move leading to simplification – 12...♘fd5!.

In his book *Selected Games*, Botvinnik indicates that 13.♗c2 would be met by 13...g6 with the threats of 14...♘b4 and 14...♗xg5, while on 13.♗e3 Black could play 13...♘xc3! (we shall later examine the idea of this exchange in more detail) 14.bxc3 ♗a4. Finally, if 13.♘e4 then 13...♗a4, and Black forces simplifications in his own favour.

There followed:

13.♘e5! ♗c6 14.♖ad1! ♘b4 15.♔h3!

White is achieving the optimum deployment of his forces. His knight has occupied the strong vanguard post e5; his rook has not only fortified the centre pawn but is ready to support the threat of pushing this pawn forward

if the case should arise. The queen attacks the points h7 and e6.

15...♙d5 16.♘xd5 ♘bxd5

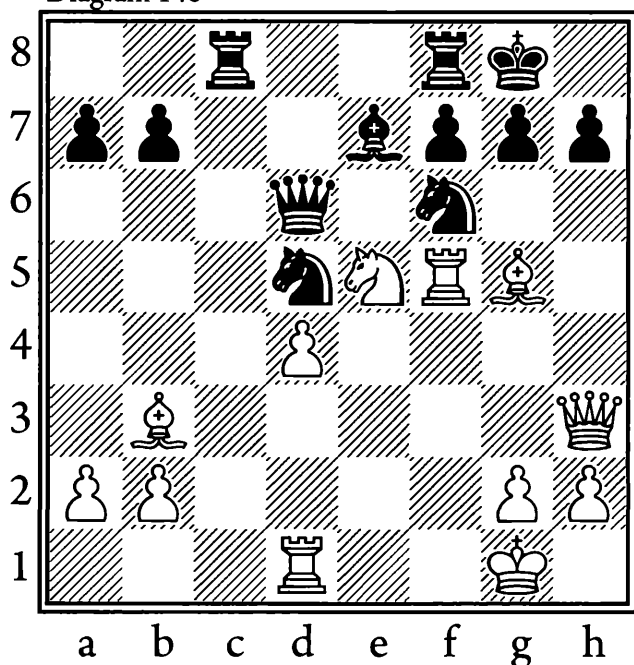
Once again 16...♘fxd5 was better.

17.f4!

The start of the decisive attack.

17...♖c8 18. f5 exf5 19.♖xf5 ♔d6

Diagram 146



20.♘xf7!

An attractive conclusion to White's attack. The combination is based on the diagonal crossfire of White's queen and bishop and the pins on the black pieces.

**20...♖xf7 21.♙xf6 ♙xf6 22.♖xd5 ♔c6
23.♖d6 ♔e8 24.♖d7
1-0**

The game received a brilliancy prize.

Black perished in this game due to his failure to oppose White's strategically purposeful play with an effective plan of his own, arising out of the nature of the position.

Black's crushing defeat, in this and some other games played in similar lines, does not in itself prompt us to conclude that the typical

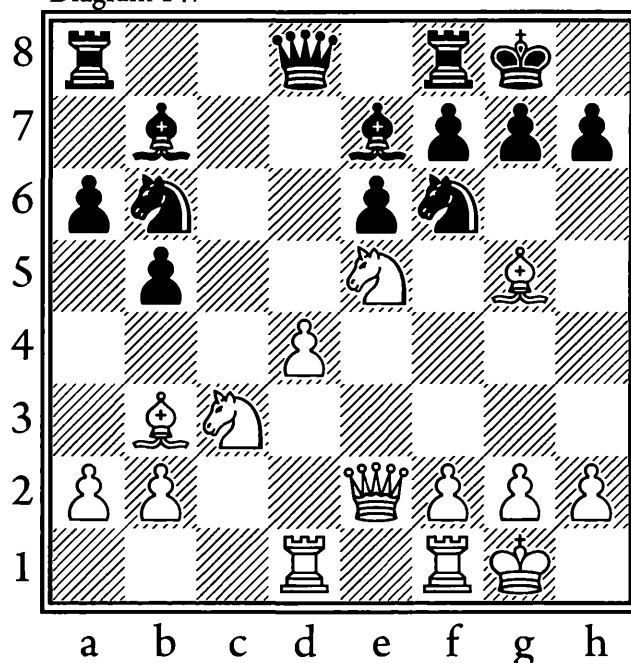
positions of this kind are difficult for him to play. We first need to clarify what happens if Black structures his play according to the demands of the position. It turns out that there are a good many examples of Black successfully repelling White's attack and steering the game into an ending which is in his own favour.

M. Taimanov – I. Lipnitsky

Moscow 1952

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♙g5 ♙e7
5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♖c1 dxc4 7.♘f3 a6 8.♙xc4
c5 9.0-0 b5 10.♙b3 ♙b7 11.♔e2 cxd4
12.exd4 0-0 13.♘e5 ♘b6 14.♖cd1**

Diagram 147



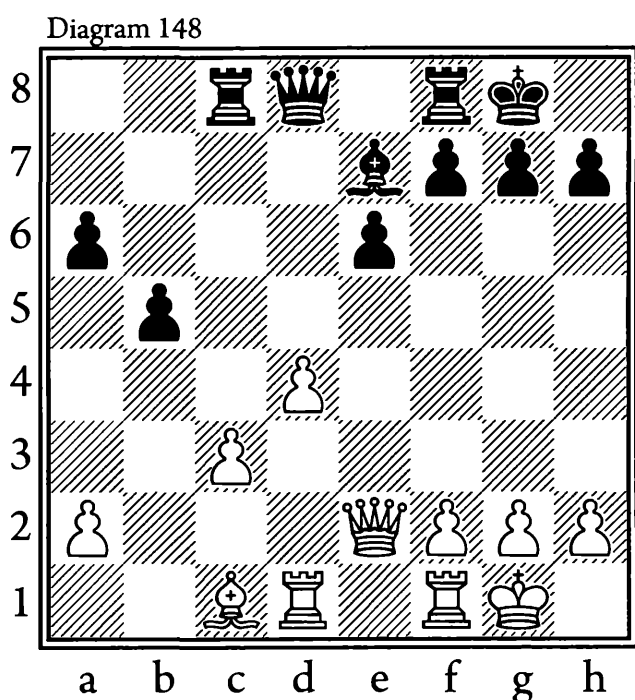
White has arranged his forces on the exact pattern of Botvinnik – Vidmar (except for the queen on e2). Compared with that game, however, the black pieces here are more harmoniously placed for solving the strategic tasks that lie ahead. There followed:

14...♘fd5! 15.♙c1 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♖c8

We already know that simplification favours Black. But does that hold good here? With a knight exchange that enables White to bolster his isolated pawn, isn't Black helping his

opponent to strengthen his position? In other words, is that exchange positionally correct? It turns out that it is.

A backward pawn has appeared for White on the open c-file, giving him a fair amount of worry. Should Black succeed in exchanging the light-squared bishops and the other pair of knights, White would be left with a difficult game. Let's imagine the position with these pieces removed.



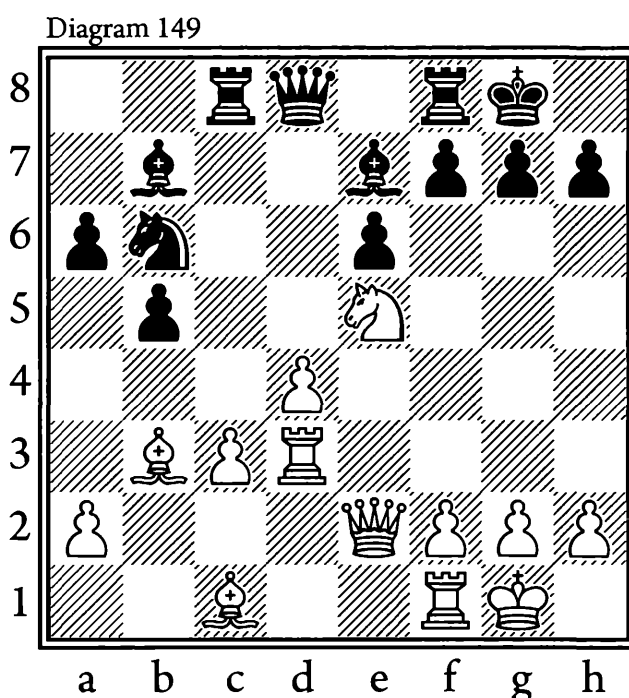
White's attack is now completely illusory while his pawn weaknesses are substantial.

I would call the reader's attention to the fact that the exchange of knights and light-squared bishops would be a *purely positional manoeuvre* on Black's part, aimed at making the white pawns more vulnerable by weakening the squares around them – c4, d5. At the same time Black would be leaving his opponent with a "bad" bishop, unable to cover these weak squares and condemned to do nothing but defend the weak white pawns.

However, let's return to the game. White has a knight and light-squared bishop still on the board and therefore hopes his attack will succeed. Play proceeded:

17.♖d3

An attempt to rid himself of the weak c-pawn by 17.c4 would be positionally unjustified and would in any case be refuted combinatorically by 17...bxc4 18.♘xc4 ♕xg2! etc.



White's rook manoeuvre is undertaken for attacking purposes. The pawn on c3 is defended at the same time. It should always be kept in mind, however, that by bringing his rook out White is weakening his back rank. A similar rook manoeuvre had repeatedly been seen in earlier games.

Take for example the game Botvinnik – Flohr (Groningen 1946), in which Flohr faced White's strong attack with a defence that was no less strong and conducted with exceptional sangfroid. The reason he succeeded may have been that, as Botvinnik put it, "Flohr is perhaps the subtlest positional player of our day." In the Taimanov – Lipnitsky game, the continuation was:

17...♘d5

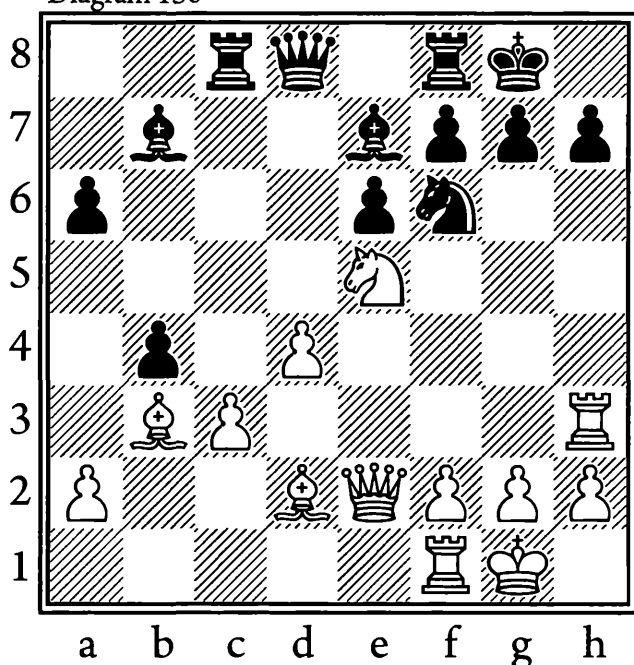
Played not only to attack c3 but also with a view to defending the kingside, where White's attack is directed.

18.♔d2 ♖f6

Now White's attack is not so terrible, especially since Black can play ♗b7-e4 when appropriate.

19.♖h3 b4!

Diagram 150



In view of White's kingside threats, Black has difficulty carrying out the idea of exchanging off two minor pieces. The idea is desirable, but at present impracticable. Actions of a more energetic type are needed, and the move played answers this purpose. It is a positional thrust typical of such situations. If White captures on b4, he loses the d4-pawn.

20.♖d1 bxc3 21.♔xc3 ♖d5

Black uses the d5-point as a springboard for the manoeuvres of his pieces.

22.♔d2 ♗g5!

With his rook deflected from f1 to d1, White cannot now reply f2-f4. The bishop exchange, which he can hardly avoid, will simplify the position still further. In addition, the penetration of Black's rooks along the c-file to the first rank, weakened by the departure of White's other rook, becomes a realistic prospect.

23.♖g3

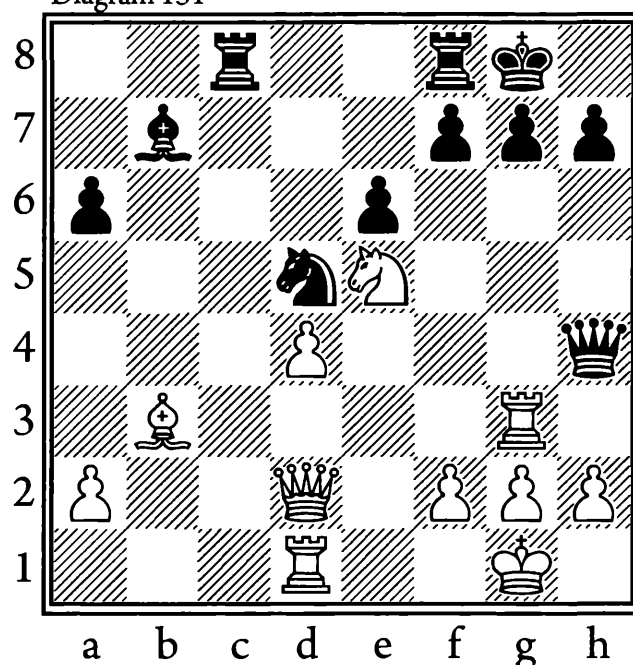
23.♖h5 is not dangerous in view of 23...h6!.

23...♔xd2!

The actual game continuation was 23...♔h4 24.♖h3 ♗g5 25.♖d3, and now Black went wrong by giving himself a weakness with 25...f5. After the correct move 25...g6, the position would scarcely have differed from the one we are examining.

24.♖xd2 ♖h4

Diagram 151



Black has the better position. His plan is being pursued more effectively than his opponent's. Two minor pieces on each side have already been exchanged, and a file is open for an invasion by the rooks. White's threats on the kingside are not dangerous.

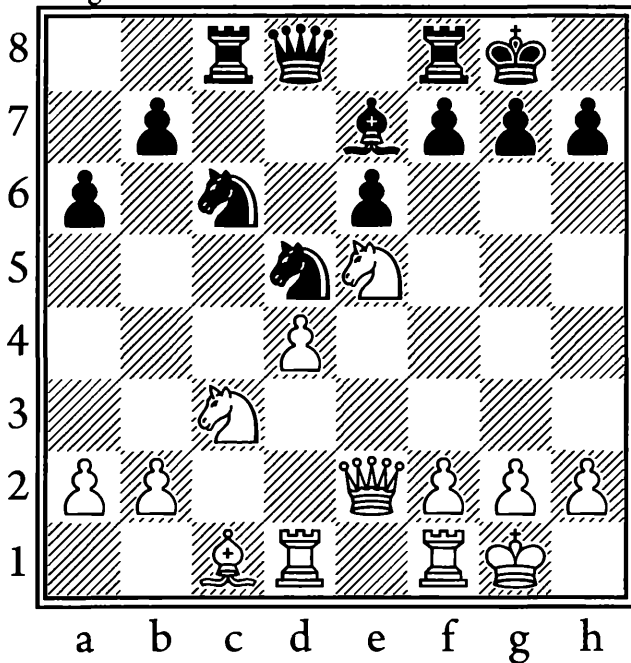
It was easy for Black to play this game, because *he was familiar with the basic positional ideas of the typical structure we are examining* – the frequently occurring structure with White's isolated queen's pawn. Study of further games on these lines will lead to still deeper understanding of the ideas.

A. Tolush – A. Sokolsky

Moscow 1950

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0–0
 5.♙d3 d5 6.♘f3 c5 7.0–0 cxd4 8.exd4
 dxc4 9.♙xc4 ♘c6 10.♙g5 ♙e7 11.♙d3
 ♘a5 12.♙b5 ♙d7 13.♘e5 ♙xb5 14.♙xb5
 a6 15.♙e2 ♘d5 16.♙d2 ♖c8 17.♙ad1
 ♘c6 18.♙c1

Diagram 152



The light-squared bishops have already been exchanged. The plans for both sides remain the same. The positional assessment of this situation comes down in favour of Black, whose plan is easier to execute.

18...♘xc3

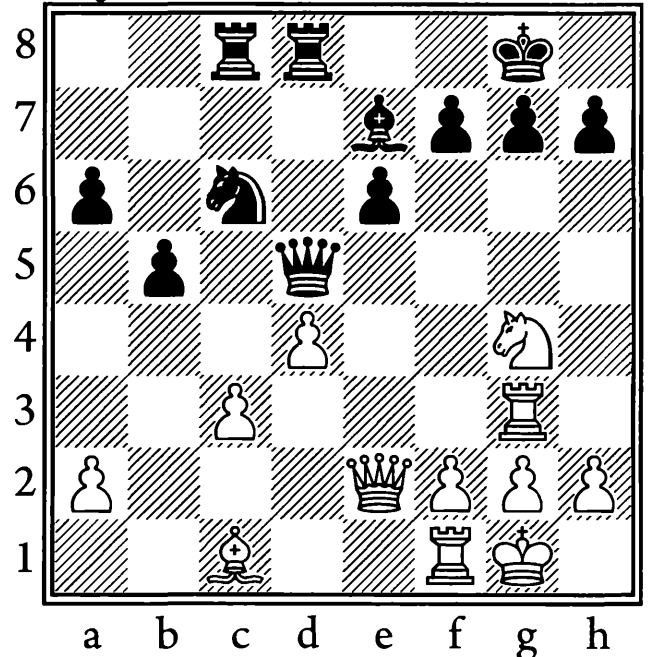
By now this move requires no explanation. Tolush, however, holds 18...♙f6! to be stronger, increasing the pressure against the pawn on d4. In that case if White brought his rook to d3 for purposes of attack, there would be a combinative refutation: 19.♙d3 ♘xd4! 20.♙xd4 ♙xc3! 21.bxc3 (21.♙xd5 ♙xd5 22.bxc3 ♙xe5) 21...♘xc3.

In Tolush's view, the continuation Black chooses gives White a vital breathing space to

defend the d4-pawn, and allows him to proceed with organizing a kingside attack.

19.bxc3 b5 20.♙d3 ♙d5 21.♘g4 ♙fd8
 22.♙g3

Diagram 153



22...b4?

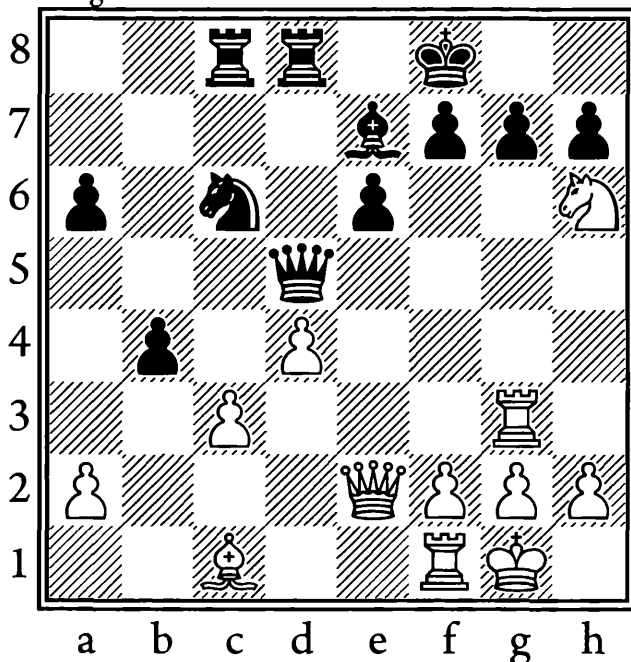
We are already familiar with this positional device. Yet even the best positional ideas must be implemented with due regard for the concrete circumstances. Here this move is premature because White has a striking combination available.

Black should first have taken prophylactic measures with 22...g6. He could have carried on with his plan only after that. White's attack is not dangerous after, for instance, 23.♘h6† ♔g7!. If 23.♙a3, then 23...b4! etc.

23.♘h6† ♔f8

(See diagram next page)

Diagram 154



24. ♖xg7!!

Tolush rarely misses such opportunities.

24... ♔xg7 25. ♕g4† ♙g5! 26. c4! ♕xd4
27. ♕xg5† ♔f8

Now quickest was 28. ♕g8† ♔e7 29. ♕xf7†
♔d6 30. ♙f4† ♔e5 31. ♔g4 and wins, instead
White won on move 40.

Finally let's look at the course of the ninth
Steinitz – Zukertort match game, which simi-
larly featured a position with an isolated pawn
on d4.

J. Zukertort – W. Steinitz

New Orleans (9) 1886

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4. ♘f3 dxc4
5. e3 c5 6. ♙xc4 cxd4 7. exd4 ♙e7 8. 0–0
0–0

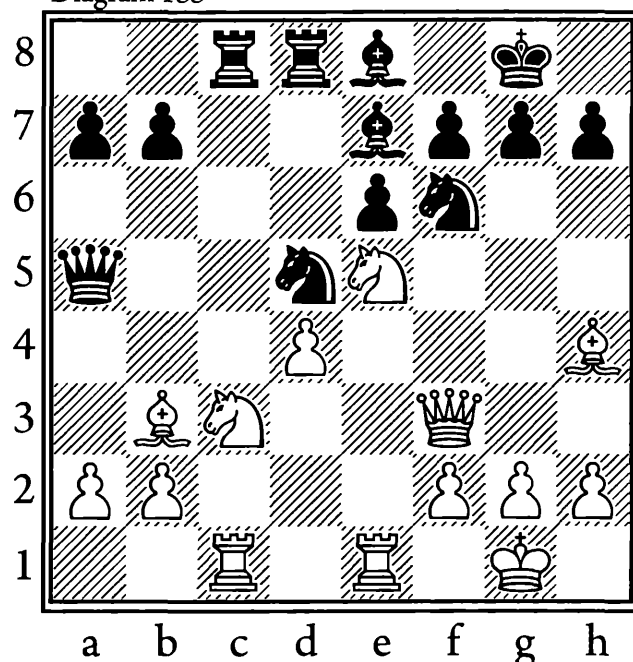
“Up to now, White has only been developing.
Zukertort knows how to do this in masterly
fashion. Steinitz, even at this early stage of the
game, has been pursuing a plan – that of iso-
lating his opponent's queen's pawn.” (*Here and
subsequently, comments in quotation marks are
Emanuel Lasker's.*)

9. ♕e2 ♘bd7 10. ♙b3 ♘b6 11. ♙f4 ♘bd5
12. ♙g3

“Zukertort is playing without any plan. He
hopes for complications which will provide
combinative opportunities; until then, he is
playing almost haphazardly.”

12... ♕a5 13. ♖ac1 ♙d7 14. ♘e5 ♖fd8
15. ♕f3 ♙e8 16. ♖fe1 ♖ac8 17. ♙h4

Diagram 155



17... ♘xc3!

In this game Steinitz convincingly demon-
strates the positional method of fighting
against an isolated pawn on d4. The regroup-
ing he carried out earlier facilitates both attack
and defence. We should particularly note an
instructive manoeuvre – ♖f8-d8, followed by
bringing the bishop to e8 – which is one of the
devices of present-day positional technique.

18. bxc3 ♕c7

So as to carry out an idea for simplification
that we already know about.

19. ♕d3 ♘d5! 20. ♙xe7 ♕xe7 21. ♙xd5

“White should have held on to this splendid
bishop, but in his pursuit of forcing moves and
the combinations that come with them, he
even gives up his strong pieces.”

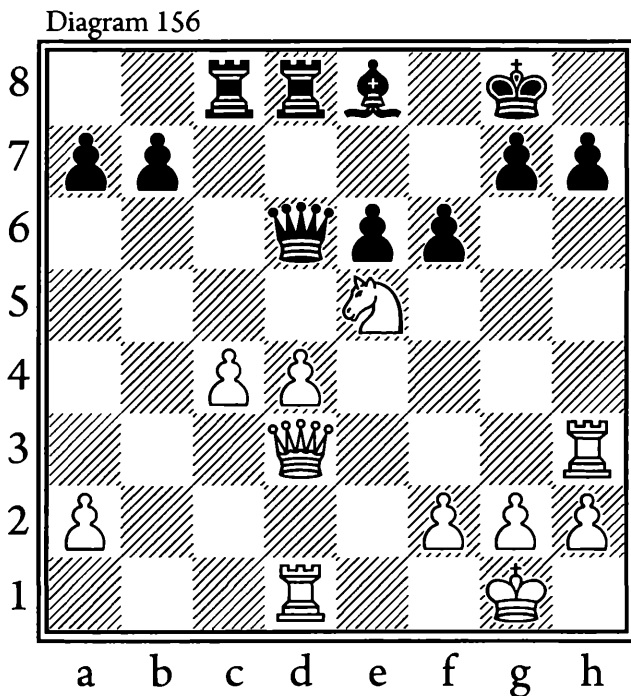
21... ♖xd5 22. c4 ♖dd8 23. ♖e3

“This attack on the enemy’s extremely robust king position is undertaken with insufficient means and is therefore unjustified.”

23...♔d6

“The counter-measure consists of systematic pressure against the white pawn phalanx.”

24.♖d1 f6 25.♖h3



25...h6 26.♘g4 ♕f4

By contrast with the Tolush – Sokolsky game we looked at, Black here forestalls any piece sacrifices.

27.♘e3 ♘a4!

The need to defend the d4-pawn forces the white rook to abandon the first rank.

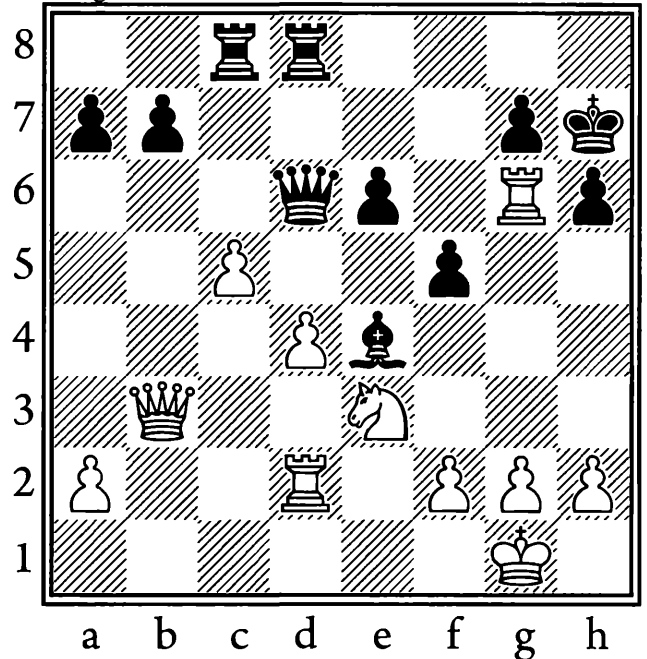
28.♖f3 ♕d6 29.♖d2 ♘c6 30.♖g3 f5

So as to drive White’s pieces back further.

31.♖g6 ♘e4 32.♕b3 ♖h7 33.c5

Forced in order to rescue the stricken rook on g6.

Diagram 157



**33...♖xc5 34.♖xe6 ♖c1† 35.♘d1 ♕f4
36.♕b2 ♖b1 37.♕c3 ♖c8**

The second rook heads for White’s back rank.

38.♖xe4

Hoping for perpetual check after 38...fxe4 39.♕xc8 ♕xd2 40.♕f5† etc.

38...♕xe4

0–1

The positional ideas in the typical situation with the isolated d4-pawn, which we have just been examining, are familiar to many players today. Yet 70 years ago, when Steinitz was applying them, they were nothing short of a revelation.

Does the study of this typical formation serve to develop a player’s positional skills? Undoubtedly! It reveals to us:

- (1) the plans for both sides – White’s attack on the kingside, Black’s play against the isolated pawn;
- (2) the methods of executing these plans by the most suitable deployment of the forces; and
- (3) some specific positional devices. For instance ♘f6-d5! to exchange bishops, ♘e7-g5! with the same end in view, ♘d5xc3! to give

the opponent a weak pawn on the open file, and so on. Or, on White's side – the use of the third rank to bring a rook to the kingside, the occupation of e5 by a knight, etc.

These positional ideas are characteristic of the typical formation in question. But then, plenty of other typical formations are known. They too have their positional subtleties, ideas and devices which can be classified and studied.

A thoughtful, deep study of chess (in conjunction with tournament practice) serves to develop that valuable quality of positional flair – “feel for the position” – without which no one can think of becoming a strong player.

Familiarity with a variety of chess ideas enhances our chess culture and widens our imaginative horizons. Its result is a growing ability to play creatively, even in completely different situations – not only by executing the ideas we have intimately explored, but also by devising new ones.

Chapter 10

Plans in the Opening

Some chessplayers regard the opening as a kind of preliminary scenario, a prelude to what counts as the real struggle. Underrating the significance of the opening, they develop their pieces “randomly” so to speak; they presume that they can think about choosing a specific plan only after most of the pieces have been brought out. The authors of some chess books also adhere to such mistaken views.

In one of these books, devoted specially to the openings, we read the following: in the opening “the deployment of both sides’ forces takes place before the resolute engagements of the middlegame... It is too early to be thinking about concrete plans for attacking the enemy position; the play has to issue from general considerations, well-defined principles.” In another book the author asserts that “a player first needs to fulfil the aims of the opening [*meaning the development of the pieces – I.L.*]; only afterwards can he devise strategic plans and think of the tactical means to accomplish them.”

This kind of advice is far from the truth and can only serve to disorient players who lack sufficient experience. It is obvious that attempts to sever the opening from the middlegame are theoretically unfounded. The modern view of the matter is basically that the opening is not preparation for the struggle, but the start of the struggle itself.

This struggle unfolds on the basis of specific concrete plans. The secret of handling the opening successfully lies very largely in the art of devising an expedient game plan and the ability to put it precisely into operation. The foregoing chapters offered a good many examples of how particular opening plans are carried out.

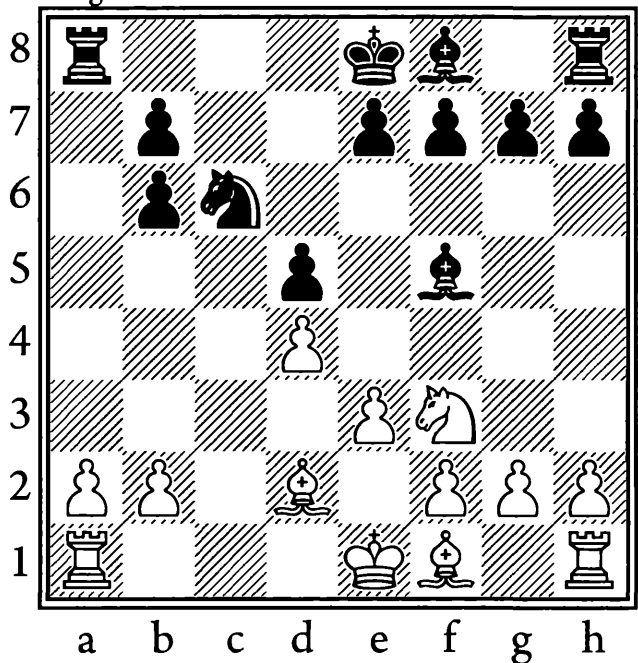
Let’s examine this issue in rather more detail.

D. Janowski – J.R. Capablanca

New York 1916

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.c4 c6 4.♘c3 ♙f5
5.♙b3 ♙b6 6.♙xb6 axb6 7.cxd5 ♘xd5
8.♘xd5 cxd5 9.e3 ♘c6 10.♙d2

Diagram 158



Following general considerations and abstractly applying the principle of developing the pieces as quickly as possible, Black would have to play e7-e6 now. But in that case his bishop on f5 would be cut off from the queenside where it could be needed. Capablanca devises an appropriate game plan based on a concrete appraisal of the features of the position. In his book *My Chess Career*, he states his reasoning as follows:

“Black’s plan consists in advancing the b6-pawn and transferring his knight to c4. White will then be forced to take the knight, and Black will recapture with the b-pawn, ridding himself of his doubled pawns and increasing the pressure against the enemy pawns on the a- and b-files.”

There followed:

10...♙d7!!

“In the interests of implementing his plan, Black even withdraws a piece already brought out. The plan comes above all else.” (Emanuel Lasker)

11.♙e2 e6 12.0–0 ♙d6 13.♖fc1 ♔e7 14.♙c3 ♜hc8

The opening has passed into the middlegame. Black is carrying out the plan he has conceived.

15.a3 ♘a5 16.♘d2 f5 17.g3 b5 18.f3

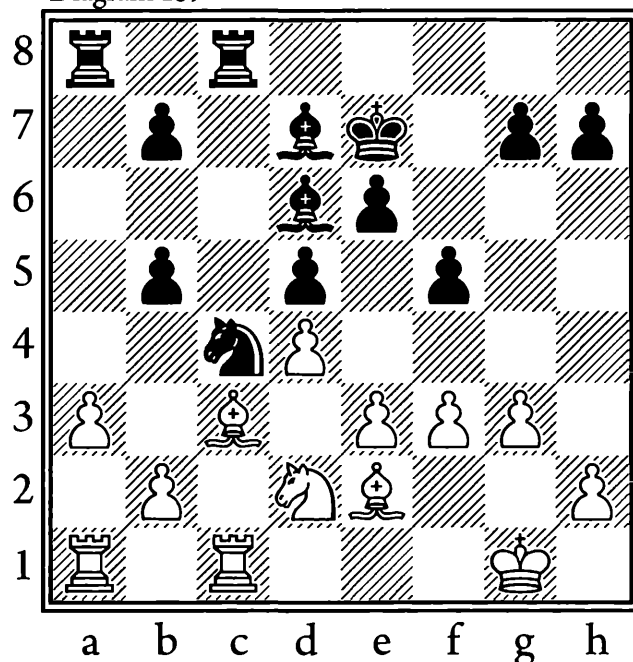
Janowski does not probe into his opponent’s plan and is not struggling against it. He should have continued 18.♙xa5! ♜xc1† (not 18...♜xa5 19.♜xc8 ♙xc8 20.♘b3 with advantage to White) 19.♜xc1 ♜xa5 20.♘b3 ♜a8 21.♘c5, with about equal chances.

Apart from being innocuous in itself, the advance in the centre which White is undertaking does nothing to hinder Black in carrying out his design.

18...♘c4

Black’s original opening plan is accomplished.

Diagram 159



“Now Black will spend two or three moves improving the general strategic arrangement of his pieces, before proceeding to carry out a new plan, which this time involves attacking the enemy position.” (*Here and subsequently, the notes in quotation marks are Capablanca’s.*)

19.♙xc4 bxc4 20.e4 ♔f7

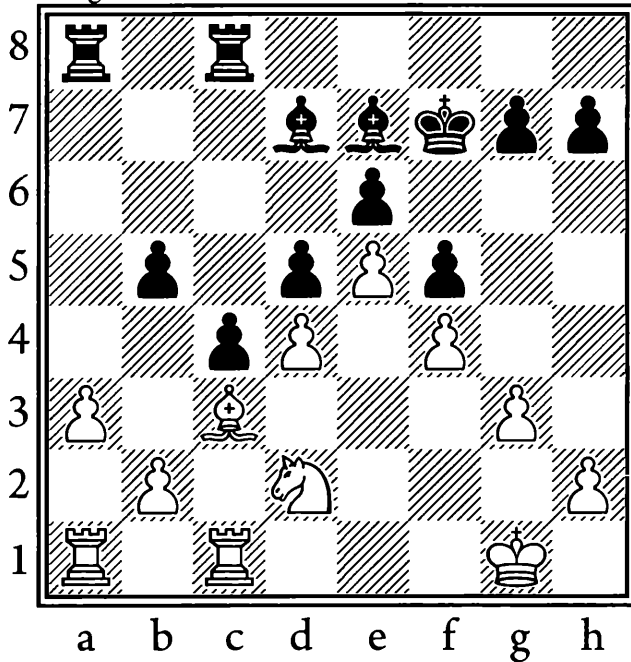
Black does well to avoid opening up the centre, so as not to give White counterplay. By removing his king to f7, Capablanca does not let his dark-squared bishop be driven off the a3-f8 diagonal.

21.e5 ♙e7 22.f4 b5

As the result of carrying out his plan successfully, Black has acquired a positional advantage consisting in the superior placing of his pieces and the possibility of action on both wings. In order to exploit his advantage, he needs to devise a new plan.

Even though this is no longer an *opening* plan, it will be very useful to examine it.

Diagram 160



“Black has finished organizing his position. He is not threatened with any danger, and all his pieces are well placed. It is therefore time to start executing a new plan of attack.

“In the present situation the plan is as follows. By threatening b5-b4, Black will tie as many enemy pieces as possible to the queenside. He will then partially open up the kingside with g7-g5 and occupy the open g-file, thanks to the greater mobility of his pieces.”

23.♔f2 ♖a4 24.♔e3 ♖ca8 25.♖ab1

Black was threatening 25...b4.

25...h6

The start of the kingside offensive.

26.♘f3 g5 27.♘e1 ♖g8 28.♔f3 gxf4 29.gxf4 ♖aa8 30.♘g2 ♖g4 31.♖g1

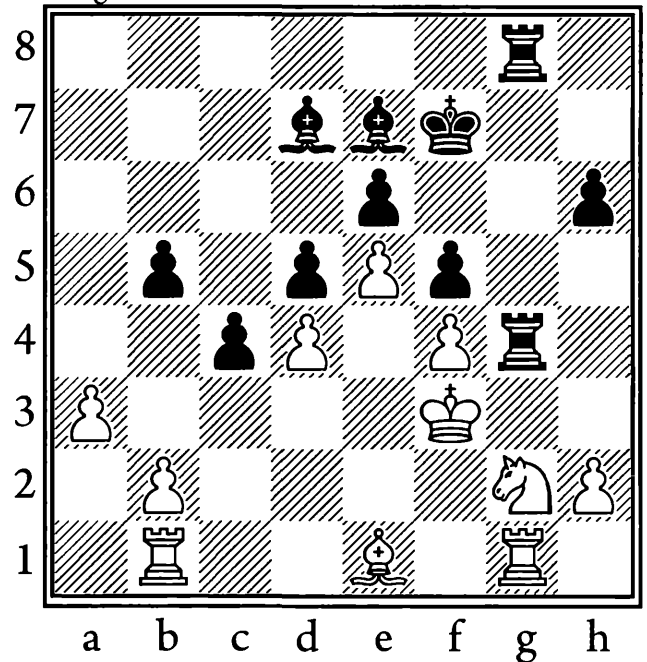
Or 31.♘e3 ♖h4! 32.♖c2 ♖g8 with the threat of ...♖h3†, and White is in a bad way.

31...♖ag8

“Now all that remains for Black to do in order win the game is utilize his bishop on d7 to increase the pressure on White’s position.”

32.♕e1

Diagram 161



32...b4! 33.axb4

Or 33.♕xb4 ♕xb4 34.axb4 h5, and the advance of the h-pawn is decisive.

33...♕a4

The bishop comes into the game.

34.♖a1 ♕c2 35.♕g3 ♕e4† 36.♔f2 h5 37.♖a7 (or 37.♘e3 h4! etc.) 37...♕xg2 38.♖xg2 h4 39.♕xh4 ♖xg2†

Black soon won.

White’s play in this game creates an impression of extreme helplessness. The cause of his loss was that:

(a) He didn’t counter his opponent’s plan with one of his own.

(b) He didn’t struggle against the plan that Black was pursuing.

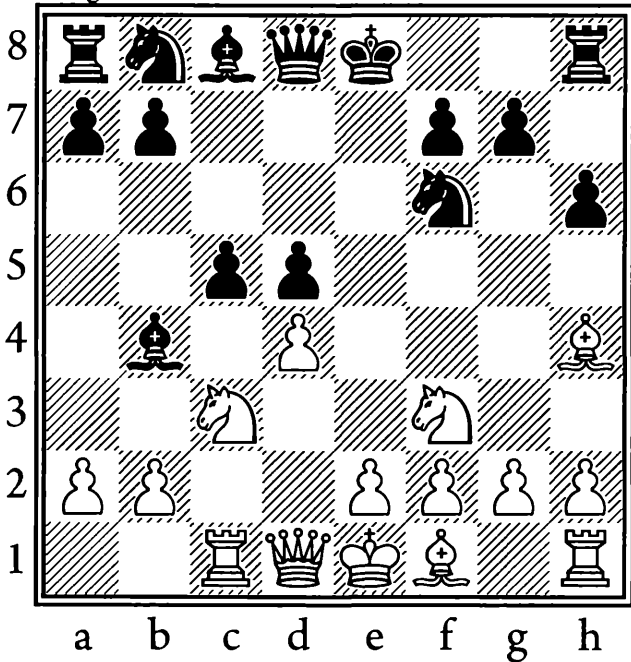
In the following example, by contrast with the Janowski – Capablanca game, concrete opening plans are implemented by *both* sides.

G. Stahlberg – M. Filip

Helsinki 1952

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♕b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♕g5 h6 7.♕h4 c5 8.♖c1

Diagram 162



There now followed:

8...c4!

Black lays the foundation of his plan, which consists in organizing a queenside offensive with the aid of his pawn majority in that sector.

9.♘d2!

White opposes his opponent's design with a plan of his own – a pawn storm on the king-side. With his last move he accomplishes two tasks:

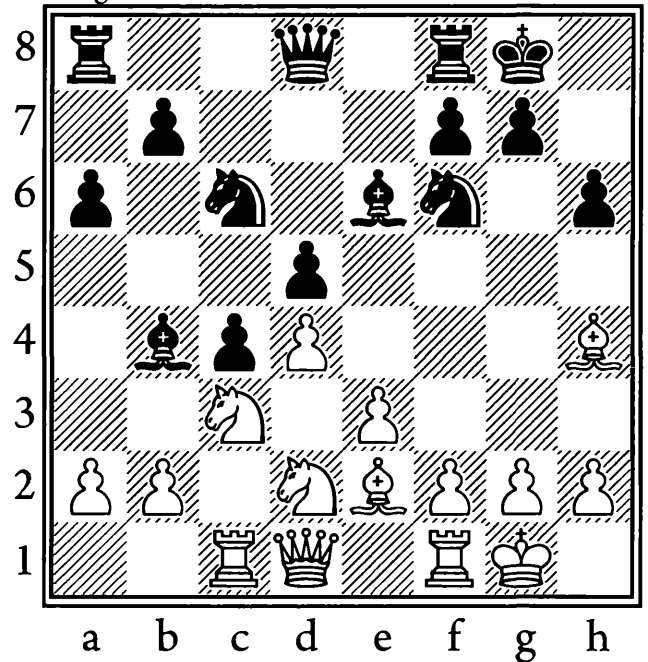
- (1) he frees the path for his f-pawn, and
- (2) by setting up a threat against the d5-pawn he draws the black bishop onto e6, where it will later enable the white f-pawn to advance with tempo.

Once again we see how an already developed piece is moved a second time in the interests of a plan.

9...♙e6 10.e3 0-0 11.♙e2 ♘c6 12.0-0 a6

In accordance with his scheme, Black is preparing the advance b7-b5. However...

Diagram 163



13.f4! ♘e7 14.g4!

It now turns out that White's plan is the more dangerous. Black switches completely to defence, but his protective manoeuvres come too late.

14...♘h7 15.f5

This is where Black's 9...♙e6 "comes in handy" for White.

15...♙c8 16.e4! ♘g5 17.♙xg5 hxg5 18.e5

White has an easily won position.

In this game we saw how:

- (1) both sides conceived their plans in the process of their opening development or, more precisely, they developed in accordance with the plans they had conceived;
- (2) they continued implementing these same plans in the middlegame;
- (3) Black was slow to give due attention to the fact that White's plan was developing more rapidly and was therefore more dangerous;
- (4) Black didn't take timely measures to fight against his opponent's plan, and this led to his defeat.

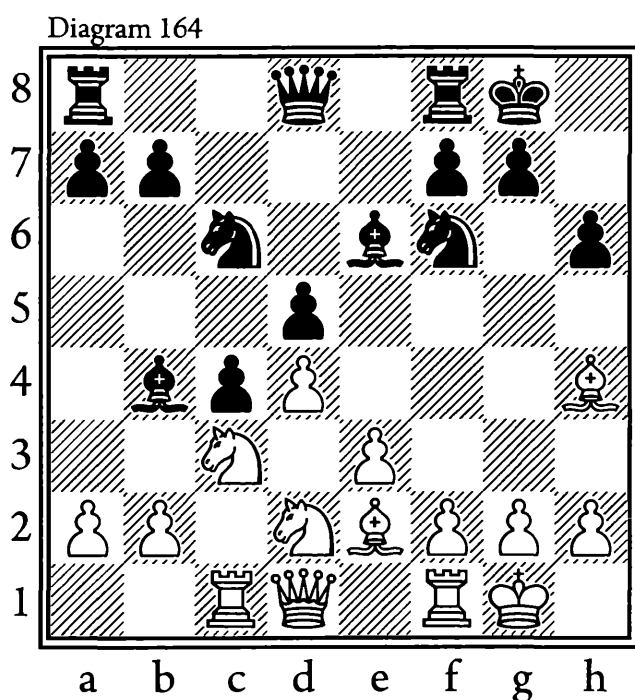
This wouldn't have happened to Black if:

(1) he had detected the possibility of White's f2-f4 and g2-g4 in good time, rather than when that plan had begun to be implemented;

(2) he had gauged by concrete analysis how much more dangerous White's plan was than his own; and, on ascertaining this,

(3) he had immediately undertaken prophylactic measures on the kingside, so as to oppose the execution of White's plan before it was too late.

Let's return to the position before Black's 12...a6.



Instead of 12...a6? he should have thought about **12...♙e7! 13.f4 ♘d7! 14.♙xe7** (if the bishop retreats, Black plays 14...f5!) **14...♘xe7!**, when the black knights are deployed very flexibly.

If now **15.g4**, then **15...f5! 16.g5 hxg5 17.fxg5 ♘g6** with an excellent game for Black, who may later use the h-file for attacking purposes and is also threatening to break with f5-f4 in the right circumstances.

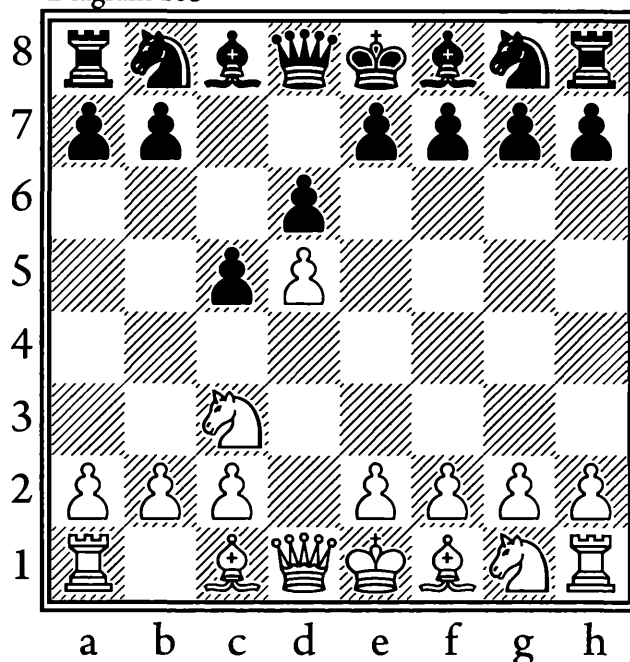
It will be instructive to follow the development of the opening plans in the following game.

V. Smyslov – L. Schmid

Helsinki 1952

1.d4 c5 2.d5 d6 3.♘c3!

Diagram 165



We are specially highlighting moves that testify to a player's chosen plan – and in this game White defines his plan as early as move three. Its essence is to bring the knight from g1 to c4, from where it will not only exert strong pressure on Black's position but can also support a pawn offensive in the centre. This is why White does not occupy c4 with a pawn.

3...g6

Black too conceives a concrete plan, which amounts to organizing a queenside pawn offensive (b7-b5) with the long-range support of the bishop on g7. To this end the knight on b8 will be transferred to c7.

4.e4 ♙g7 5.♘f3 ♘f6 6.♙e2 0–0 7.0–0 ♘a6 8.♘d2! ♘c7!

Both sides continue implementing their opening plans.

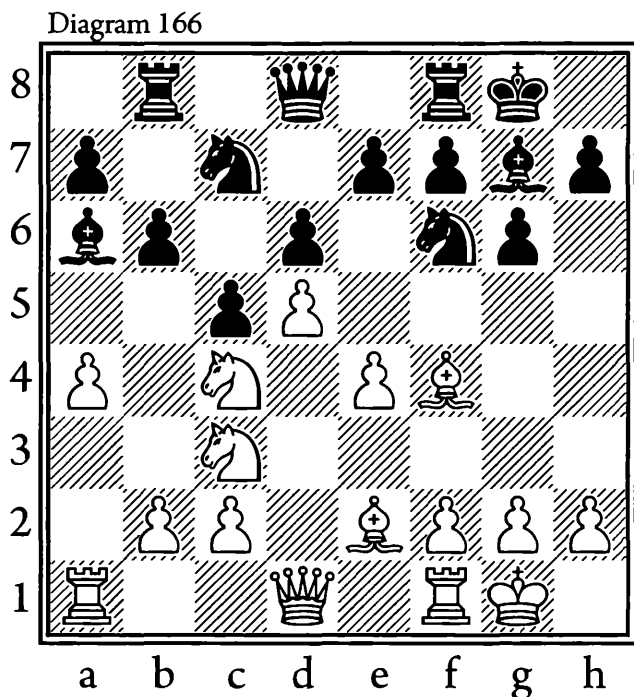
9.a4

White stops b7-b5 and fortifies the post on c4 for his knight.

9...b6 10.♘c4!

White's formation in accordance with his opening plan is near to completion.

10...♙a6! 11.♙f4 ♖b8?

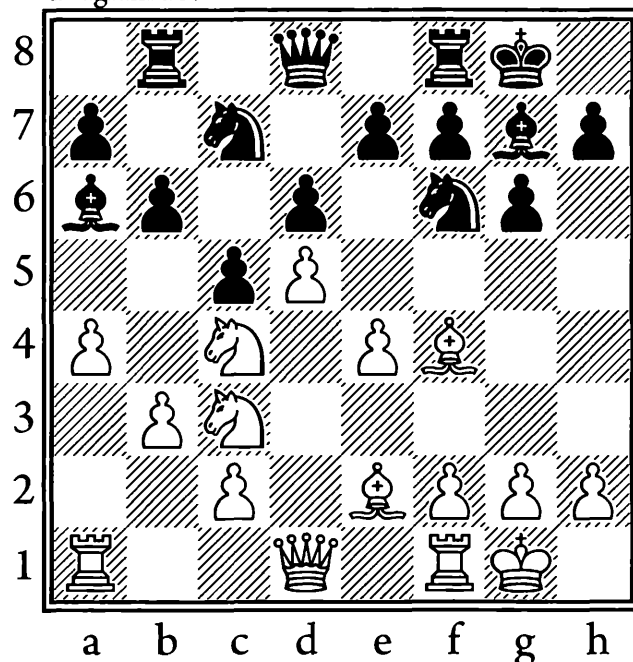


Each player has to try his utmost to ensure the fulfilment of his own plan and frustrate that of his opponent. With 10...♙a6 Black showed that he was on the right track. He should now have continued 11...♙xc4 12.♙xc4 ♘d7 followed by 13...a6, so as to impede White's operations in the centre while simultaneously carrying on with preparations for his own advance on the queenside.

Black may have supposed that the capture of the knight on c4 would still remain an option. Yet as a result of postponing it – by just one move – he will not subsequently be able to carry out this exchange. In fairness I should point out that White for his part could have prevented Black's correct move (11...♙xc4!) by playing 11.♘a3!.

12.b3!!

Diagram 167



Smyslov provides us with a splendid model of how the pursuit of your own plan should be combined with resistance to your opponent's. Now any further development of Black's plan is brought to a standstill, as 12...♙xc4 would be answered by 13.bxc4!. Then White would be the only one with attacking possibilities on the queenside, threatening a4-a5 in some cases. The strong positional move 12.b3!! required precise calculation, as it entails a pawn sacrifice.

12...♘d7 13.♙xc4 ♘d7

Since the plan of a queenside advance has proved impossible to carry out, Black pursues a new idea – an attack on the d5-pawn.

14.♙ad1!

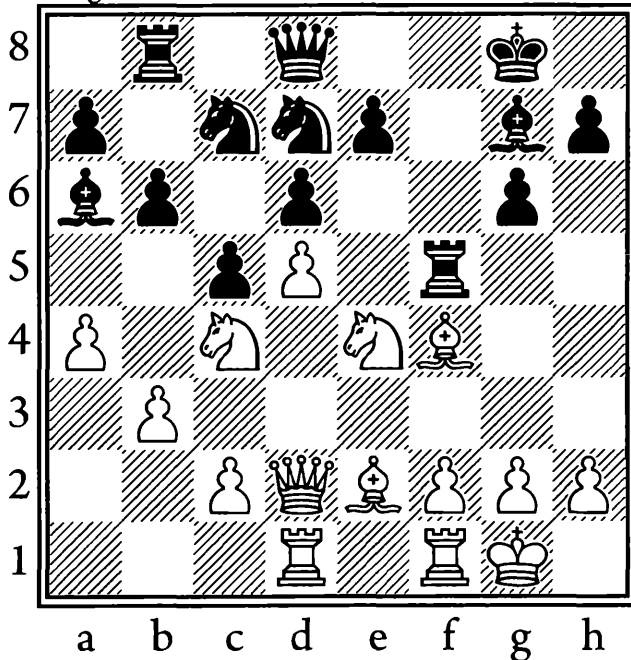
White unpins his knight on c3 and fortifies his pawn on d5. This is better than 14.exf5 14...♙xf5, when Black has various threats.

14...fxe4

Black could probably have resisted more stubbornly with 14...♙xc3 15.♙xc3 fxe4, although even then, with 16.♙h6 ♙f7 17.♙g4!, White would maintain powerful pressure.

15.♘xe4 ♙f5

Diagram 168



16. ♔g4!

At the moment when Black's idea was close to fulfilment, White strikes his blow.

16... ♖xd5

16... ♖f8 does not alter matters; Black is in trouble after 17. ♔g5.

17. ♔e6†

White wins the exchange, and soon won the game.

The Smyslov – Schmid game differs from Janowski – Capablanca and Stahlberg – Filip in that Black did for a time struggle actively against White's plan which he opposed with his own; but one inaccuracy (11... ♖b8?) allowed White to obtain an overwhelming position with the brilliant strategic stroke 12. b3!!. *Thus, success in the opening struggle depends to a very large extent on our ability to discern our opponent's plan in good time, to decide how dangerous it is and to take the correct decision accordingly. If his plan is proceeding more slowly than ours, or if for various reasons it is unrealistic, then the best thing is to press straight ahead with our own plan and execute it energetically. This will be enough to compel our opponent at some stage to renounce his designs in order to oppose our plan.* In Stahlberg – Filip, the struggle took just such a course.

On the other hand if the opponent's plan is dangerous, it is essential for us to take account of this in shaping our own play. When both sides simultaneously divine each other's plans and actively oppose their implementation, the opening struggle quite often takes on a very tense character.

I. Lipnitsky – D. Bronstein

Moscow 1952

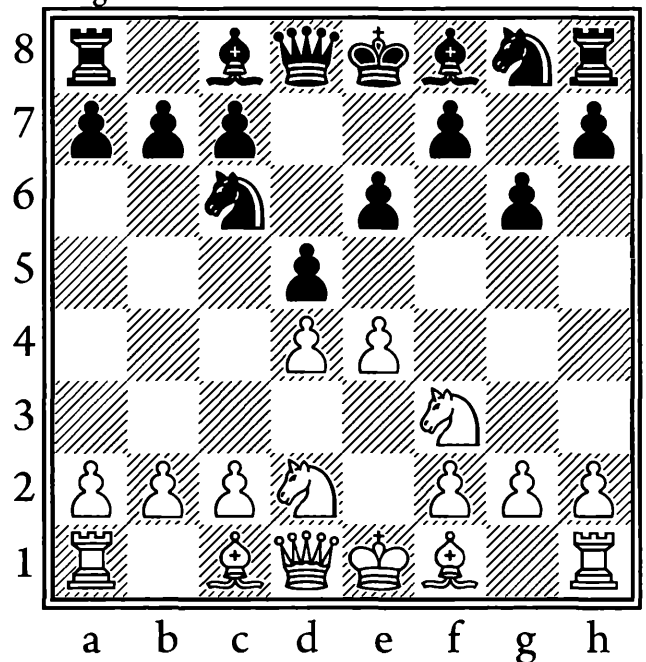
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3. ♘d2 ♘c6

In the French Defence Black more often aims for c7-c5. Bronstein chooses a rarely seen continuation. With his third move Black is already, in broad terms, deciding on his plan for play in the centre – involving e6-e5.

4. ♘gf3 g6!?

A novelty.

Diagram 169



If a "First Category" player had made this move, the commentators would probably have called his new continuation artificial to say the least. When this kind of move is played by a grandmaster, they speak of an original novelty, a fresh way of treating the opening.

What gives rise to such different evaluations of one and the same move? The point is that a grandmaster always tries to associate such a move with a distinct plan – which cannot be said, for instance, of a First Category player. The idea behind 4...g6 will be revealed by the next few moves.

5.c3 ♖g7 6.♗d3 ♞h6

Another example of how cautiously we should approach any kind of theoretical advice. All the textbooks say, “develop your knights towards the centre – they are badly placed on the edge of the board.” Bronstein declines to follow such advice; his move 6...♞h6 is linked to certain specific designs.

For the moment those designs are masked, to make it more difficult for his opponent to conduct the opening struggle. Yet White has to reckon with such possibilities as 0–0 followed by f7–f5. In that case after White’s reply (e4xd5 or e4–e5), Black would be threatening a dangerous attack on the kingside. He also has another plan available, featuring the transfer of his knight from h6 to f7 (after f7–f6).

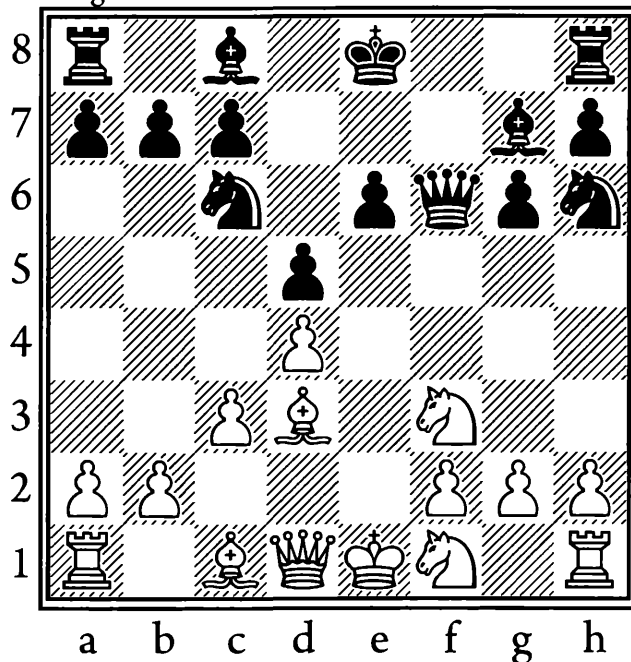
7.e5

White settles on his own plan. Since Black will have to undermine the centre with f7–f6 in order to free his game, White aims to exchange on f6 and counts on preventing e6–e5, so that he can later organize pressure against his opponent’s backward pawn on the e-file.

7...f6! 8.exf6 ♖xf6 9.♞f1!

In order to fix the black pawn on e6, this knight heads for e3 where it will attack the d5-pawn.

Diagram 170



9...♞f7!

Why didn’t Black play 9...e5 at once? It turns out that he has seen through the trap set by 9.♞f1. The immediate 9...e5 would be met by 10.♞xe5! ♞xe5 11.♖e2!, and now:

- (a) 11...0–0 12.dxe5, and Black cannot play 12...♖xe5 because of 13.♖xe5 and 14.♗xh6.
- (b) 11...♞f7 12. f4!, and White comes out a pawn up.

Thus while fitting into White’s strategic plan, 9.♞f1 was at the same time a tactical ploy.

Good traps in chess are the ones which tie in with the “script”. Setting traps for traps’ sake, unconnected with your overall plan of action, can only be successful if your opponent is careless; playing this way, the lover of traps is often merely spoiling his own game. Such a policy can only be recommended in hopeless positions: when you have nothing to lose, it is one of the means of last-ditch resistance.

10.♞e3

Once again we see that development in the opening is not an end in itself but serves as a means to realizing certain specific battle plans. The knight moves for the third time running, but this is just what enables White to fight against the plan that Black is pursuing. For the moment, e6–e5 is halted.

10...♔d7

Perhaps 10...0–0 was stronger. If then 11.h4 with the threat of h4-h5, Black has 11...e5! 12.♟xd5 ♖d6!, winning the pawn back with the better game.

11.♞e2

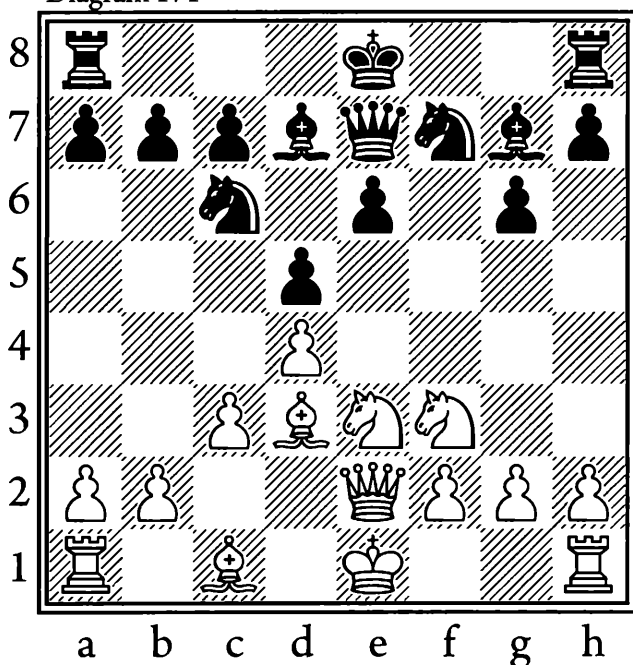
White steps up his pressure in the e-file, to hold back e6-e5.

11...♞e7

Black is forced to spend a tempo parrying the threat of 12.♟xd5.

One of the fine points of the position is that on 11...0–0–0 White has 12.♟g4 ♞e7 13.♙f4!, enabling five of his pieces to concentrate their fire against e5. Then after 13...♞he8! 14.♟ge5 ♟cxe5 15.dxe5! White remains with greater freedom of action. Instead of 15.dxe5, a weaker option would be 15.♟xe5 ♟xe5 16.♙xe5 ♙xe5 17.♞xe5 ♞d6!, since White has no reserves on hand to support his queen and retain the e5-square for a piece. The point of Black's last move (11...♞e7) is that if now 12.♟g4, Black plays 12...e5! at once.

Diagram 171

**12.♙d2?**

There is no justification for deviating from the

plan of fighting for the e5-square. True, nothing would be gained by 12.0–0 0–0 13.♞e1 ♞ae8, when Black achieves the e6-e5 advance – for instance 14.♙b5 e5! 15.♟xd5 ♞d6! etc.

On the other hand with an immediate 12.♙b5! White could eliminate the action of one of Black's pieces directed at e5. Then after 12...0–0 13.♙xc6 ♙xc6 14.♟g4 h5 15.♟ge5 ♟xe5 16.♟xe5 (16.dxe5 d4!) 16...♙xe5 17.♞xe5 ♞df8 18.♙f4, White could consider that his opening plan starting with 6.e5 had been successfully accomplished.

12...0–0–0 13.0–0–0 ♞he8

It has only taken one passive move – 12.♙d2 – to hand the initiative over to Black, whose whole army is concentrated into a powerful centralized force.

14.♟g4

White is unable to stop e6-e5, and his opening plan collapses. At this point 14.♞he1 would not help either: 14...e5! 15.dxe5 ♟fxe5 16.♟xd5 ♞d6!, with complications favourable to Black.

14...e5!

The compressed spring starts to uncoil.

15.♟gxe5 ♟cxe5 16.♟xe5 ♙xe5!

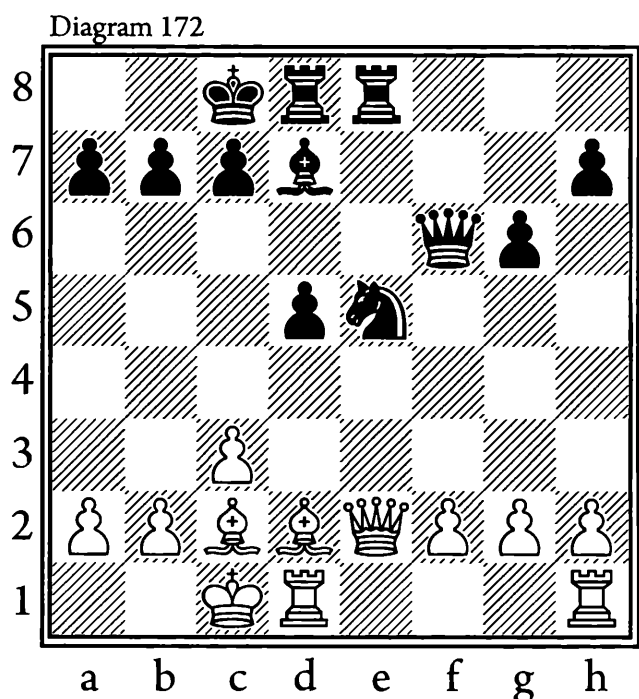
No stereotyped response! Black does not cling to the bishop pair, since a concrete appraisal of the position indicates that retaining the knight is better.

17.dxe5 ♟xe5 18.♙c2

Not sensing the crisis, White continues to avoid simplification. He does not realize that complicating the struggle is only playing into the hands of his opponent, whose pieces are more actively placed. After 18.♙f4! ♞f6 (or 18...♟xd3† 19.♞xd3 ♙f5 20.♞e3! etc.) 19.♙xe5 ♞xe5 20.♞d2, with ♞de1 to follow, the danger would be behind him.

18...♔f6

Black's opening scheme for carrying out e6-e5 has been completely fulfilled. His pieces are occupying splendid positions.



19.♙e3!?

The incipient complications are objectively in Black's favour. Despite this, after suffering a strategic defeat, White decided that plunging into the combinative whirlpool – rather than defending passively – was his best practical chance, especially since a mutual time-scramble was looming.

19...♙g4! 20.f3 ♘c4! 21.♖xd5! ♖xd5 22.♔xc4 ♙xf3!

Black could also defend both pieces by 22...♙e6, but after 23.♔a4 his rook on e8 and pawn on a7 would be *en prise*.

23.♙f4!

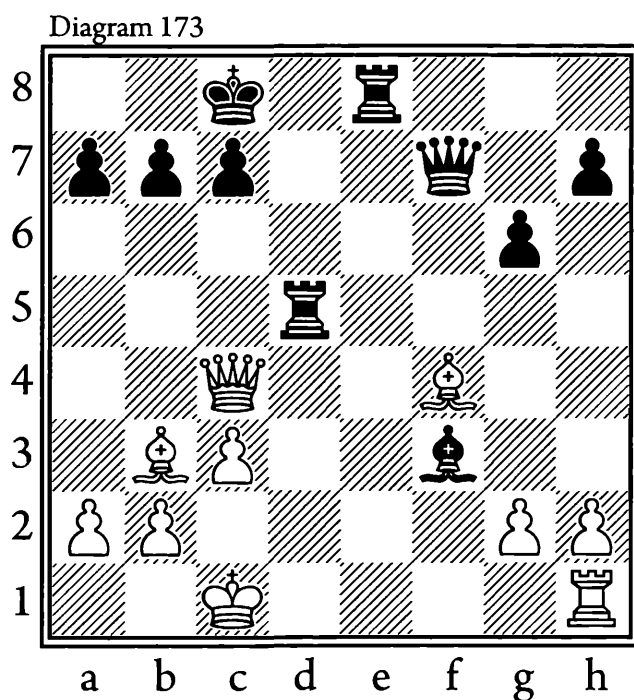
Not 23.gxf3 ♔xf3, and Black wins. But now the f-file is shut off, and White threatens mate and the capture of the bishop.

23...♔f7!

Parrying both threats by setting up 24...♖d1†!.

24.♙b3

White defends his queen and intensifies the pin, while the bishop on f3 is still “hanging”.



24...b5!?

Black could have won the exchange by 24...♖d1†! 25.♖xd1 ♔xc4 26.♙xc4 ♙xd1 27.♙xd1 ♖e4!.

He may have supposed that 24...b5 would do the trick more quickly, seeing that 25.♔b4 is met by the decisive 25...♖e4!. But White happens to have an answer:

25.♔d4! ♖xd4 26.♙xf7 ♖xf4 27.♙xe8 ♙xg2 28.♖g1 ♙e4 29.♙xb5

The game ended in a draw on the 66th move.

The need for planned action is seen in offensive and defensive operations alike. To examine this, we will take the following game as an example.

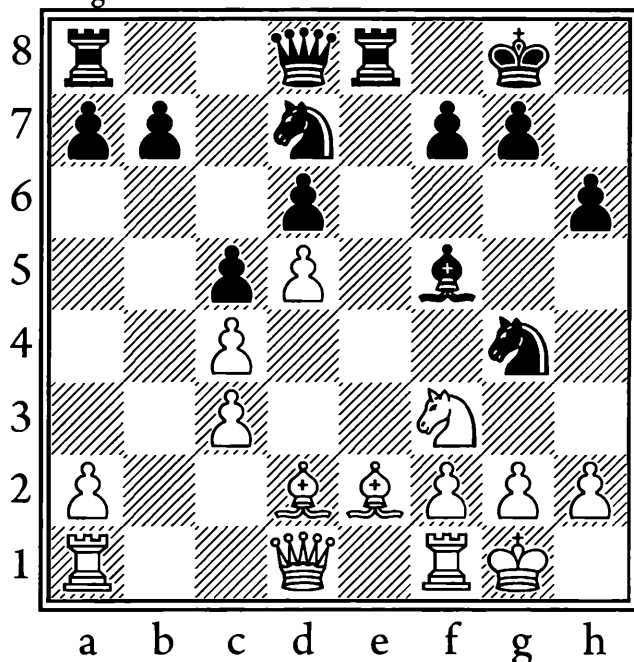
I. Lipnitsky – Y. Averbakh

Minsk 1952

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙g5 0–0 5.e4 c5 6.d5 exd5 7.exd5 ♖e8† 8.♙e2

8...♙xc3† 9.bxc3 h6 10.♙e3 d6 11.♘f3
♘g4 12.♙d2 ♙f5 13.0-0 ♘d7

Diagram 174



Black is more actively placed. He threatens to increase the pressure by ♙d8-f6 followed by doubling rooks on the e-file. The pawn on c4 is very weak, and Black may put pressure on it (especially if the light-squared bishops are exchanged).

White's tasks are a good deal more complex. He not only needs to bolster his weaknesses so as to fight against Black's plan; he must also think up some active counterplay of his own.

There followed:

14.♘e1! ♘gf6

Or 14...♘ge5 15.g4! ♙e4 16.f3 ♙h7 17.f4 with active play for White.

15.f3! ♘e5 16.♙f2

White's plan is gradually emerging. He aims to combine defence with attack. To this end it was essential to fortify the d3- and e4-squares in his own camp and prepare an attack with g2-g4, taking advantage of the weakening of Black's kingside (h7-h6).

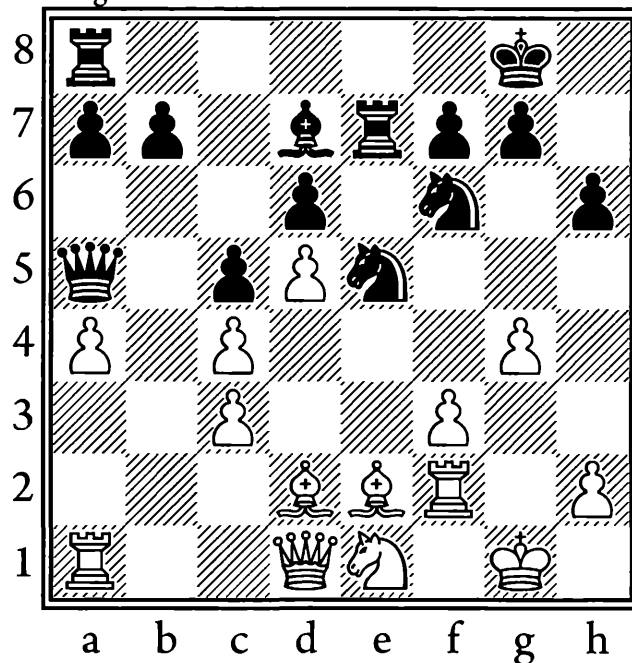
16...♙a5 17.g4 ♙d7 18.a4!

Prophylaxis on the queenside. Black was threatening to undermine White's central position with b7-b5; this would be the best answer to the flank attack White is planning.

18...♙e7

Black hastens to double his rooks on the open file. Another possible plan involved 18...♙f8, to prepare the counter-stroke f7-f5.

Diagram 175



So a good plan has enabled White to improve his position significantly and oppose Black's active play with an enterprise of his own, which he should now have pursued by 19.♘g2! ♙ae8 20.♙f1, followed by ♙d1-c2 and bringing the knight to f5.

However, White failed to fathom the specific possibilities of the position, and after the further moves:

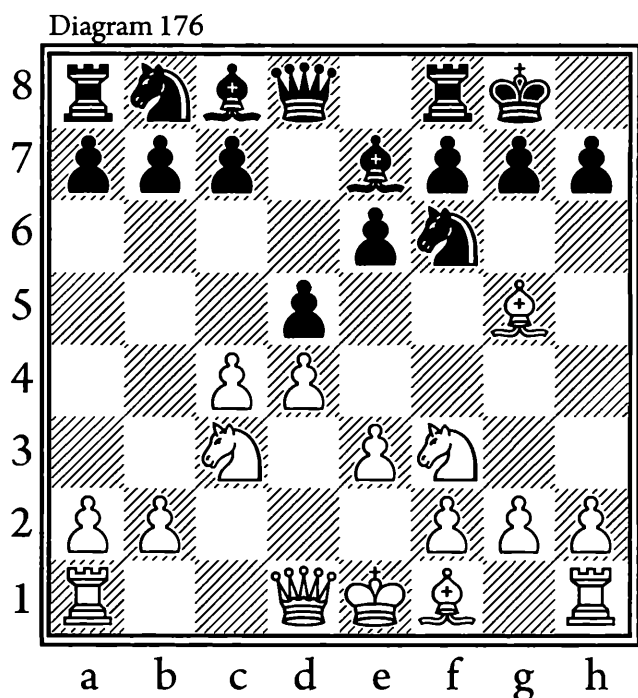
19.♙g2 ♘g6 20.♙d3 ♙ae8 21.♙c1 ♘f4!
22.♙f1

White ended an exchange down.

A very significant part of implementing your plans in the opening is to camouflage them. In the middlegame, the position is quite likely to have settled down, making it easier for the players to divine each other's plans. In the

opening, things are different. In the very process of developing the pieces, a successful blending of various plans is possible. Masking your opening plans demands a highly flexible game formation.

Take the position after **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 ♙e7 5.e3 0–0 6.♘f3**



Here **6...♘bd7** is more flexible than **6...c6**. After **6...♘bd7**, depending on what White decides to do (**7.♙c1**, **7.♙c2**, **7.♙d3** etc.), Black has the replies **7...c6**, **7...c5** or **7...dxc4** at his disposal. On the other hand with **6...c6**, which determines the shape of the pawn structure, Black is disclosing his plans to a fair extent and facilitating his opponent's play. For example, the line **6...c6 7.♙c2! ♘bd7 8.♙d1** is considered more favourable to White than **6...♘bd7 7.♙c2 c5!**.

Another example:

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♘f3

White does not commit his dark-squared bishop. He reserves the option of developing it on g5 or f4.

5...c6

A more flexible move would be **5...♙e7**,

postponing the decision as to where to place the c-pawn. For example in the event of **6.♙c2**, Black can utilize the white queen's presence on the c-file to pursue a plan with **♙e6**, **♘bd7**, **♙c8** and **c7-c5**.

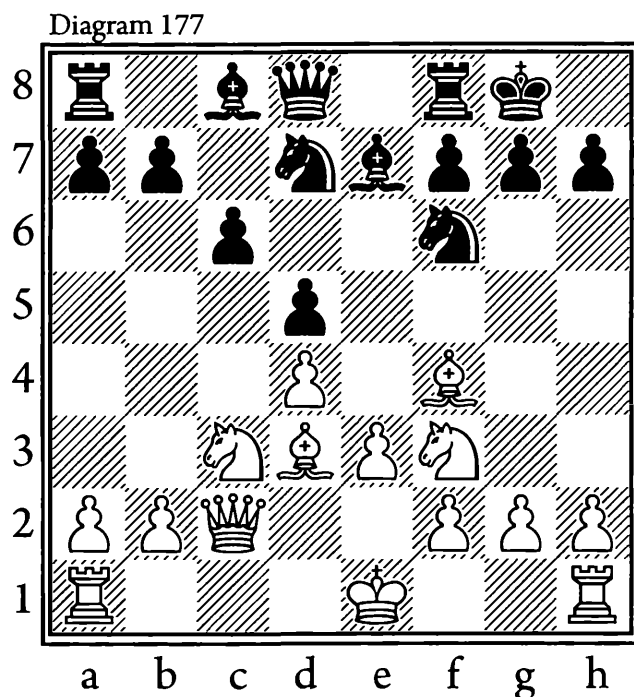
6.♙c2!

Now a similar plan with **...c5** would cost Black a tempo to carry out.

6...♙e7

The more flexible move here is **6...♘a6!** (again a knight on the edge of the board). It forces the reply **7.a3** (in view of the threatened **7...♘b4** and **8...♙f5**) and aims to centralize the knight afterwards via **c7**.

7.♙f4 0–0 8. e3 ♘bd7 9.♙d3



What is the difference between the two sides' opening formations?

- (1) Black has played straightforwardly, carrying out all the "usual" moves.
- (2) White has displayed more flexibility and has yet to disclose his plans. He may castle short and attack on the queenside, or he may remove his king to the queenside and attack on the kingside.

Ignorance of the opponent's plans makes one distinctly nervous and makes it harder to select the next move. Masking your own plans – conducting the opening flexibly – is an important device in the fight for an opening advantage. Then again, of course, it is not inconceivable that too much flexibility in building up your game might lead to difficulties. That is just what happened in the following encounter.

A. Suetin – I. Lipnitsky

Leningrad 1953

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4

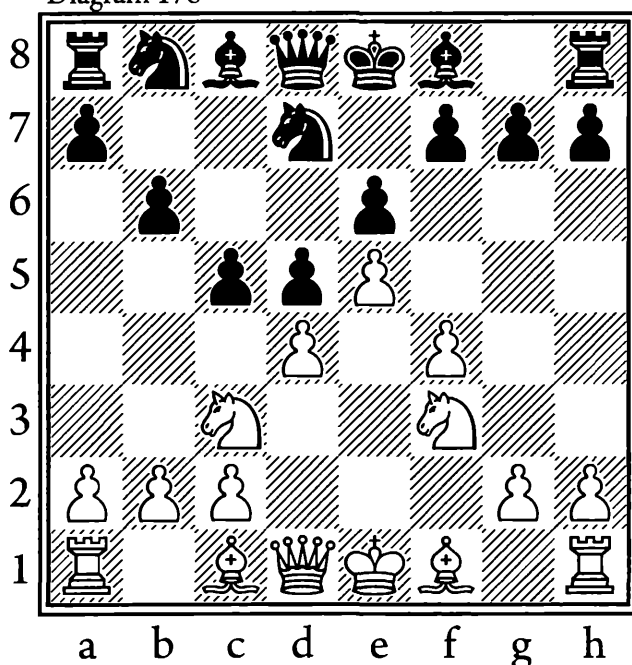
Here I reasoned as follows. White's bishop is going to go to d3, from where it will threaten the kingside. The black bishop incarcerated on c8 is deprived of any prospects. I therefore need to exchange the light-squared bishops. With this in view, I wrote down the move 5...b6.

Then, however, I decided to camouflage the manoeuvre slightly, and played:

5...c5 6.♘f3 b6

Approaching this opening casually, you might suppose that Black's last move had the aim of bolstering the c5-pawn. Suetin, however, displays the necessary perspicacity and guesses Black's intention.

Diagram 178



7.a4!

White has now prevented 7...♗a6, which would be met by 8.♗b5!. Black would then be well and truly tied up, for instance 8...♗xb5 9.axb5! etc.

If Black had played 5...b6 at once, the reply 6.a4 would not have achieved its aim – as we can see from the variation 6...♗a6 7.♗b5 c6!, and the bishop exchange *does* take place. Thus Black's “super-flexible” play merely landed him in difficulties.

The examples we have examined show that during the process of development in the opening, special attention must be given to devising concrete plans. The plans we conceive must be pursued with maximum energy and without being sidetracked by minor details, even though losses of tempo are sometimes unavoidable. The implementation of an opening plan is generally concluded in the middlegame.

In pursuing his plan, each player must try to oppose the other's efforts to do the same. When the two sides' forces clash in one area, this mutual opposition is direct. When the fight is conducted on different parts of the board, it assumes an indirect character. It is important to understand that *in the opening you have to contend not so much with your opponent's individual moves as with his ideas and plans*. Fathoming your opponent's designs makes it far easier to conduct the ensuing fight successfully. The masking of your own plans, which demands flexibility in your play, is a very significant factor.

In working out a concrete opening plan, you should remember Emanuel Lasker's well-known dictum, “A master's plan must always be based on an evaluation of the position.”

What sort of plan should be considered expedient? The value of an opening plan depends largely on how it resolves the all-important problems of (a) the centre and (b) the initiative.

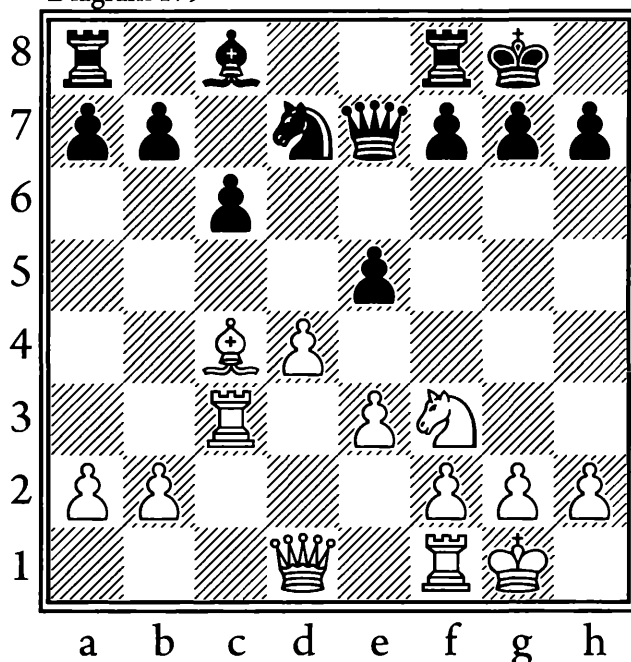
Chapter 11

The Initiative

As players have known for ages, you cannot win by just marking time. *The route to victory lies through the initiative.* At one time the dominant opinion was that the advantage of the first move gave White alone the right to the initiative, while Black's task, as prescribed to him by the "theorists", lay in so-called play for equality, in rendering White's initiative harmless. In our own day, bidding for the initiative is common to White and Black alike.

In contemporary practice, some opening systems and variations are played frequently and willingly while others have almost disappeared from players' repertoires. For example, few people today are attracted to the black side of the Orthodox Defence. After **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 ♙e7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.e3 ♘bd7 7.♖c1 c6 8.♙d3 dxc4 9.♙xc4 ♘d5 10.♙xe7 ♔xe7 11.0-0 ♘xc3 12.♖xc3 e5**, Black finally solves the important problem of developing his light-squared bishop and secures an approximately equal game.

Diagram 179



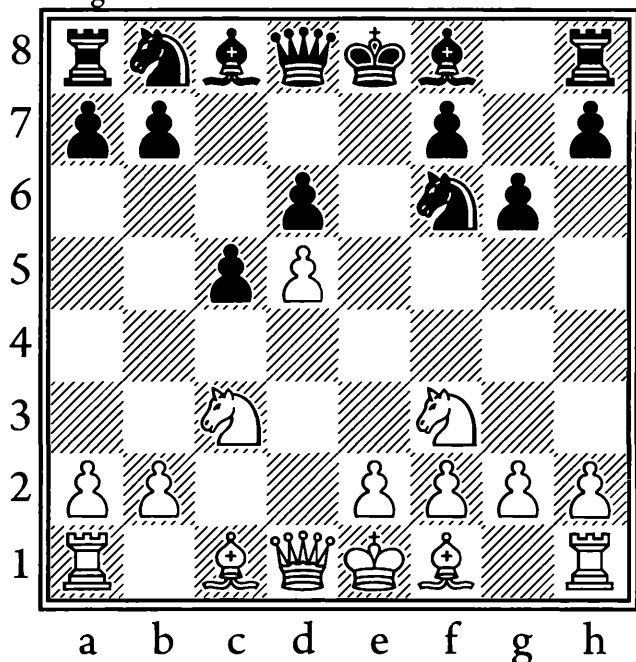
But how is he to play for a win? Where going to set White any complicated tasks: indeed quite hard to say what plan could enable Black to fight for the initiative.

By contrast, the Nimzo-Indian and Kingdian Defences offer Black plenty of scope to devise plans for active counterplay and fight for the initiative for himself. For the same reason, in answer to 1.e4 the Sicilian Defence is more frequently employed than other opening systems, including many of the Open Games that were previously so popular.

At the present time we can observe the birth of a new opening scheme which, in the Czech Grandmaster Ludek Pachman's handbook, bears the name of "the Hromadka System".

After **1.d4** ♖f6 **2.c4** e6 **3.♗c3** Black continues with **3...c5**, provoking the advance of the white d-pawn. **4.d5** exd5 **5.cxd5** d6 **6.♗f3** g6 Black fianchettoes his dark-squared bishop, whose action is enhanced by the configuration of pawns on c5 and d6.

Diagram 180



The fight will proceed on the following lines. White occupies the centre with his pawns, transfers a knight to c4 and prepares a central pawn breakthrough. To counterbalance this, Black seeks to attack on the queenside and prepares active piece play in the centre, supported by a rook on e8 and the bishop on g7.

Today Black is no longer content to neutralize White's initiative by means of exchanges and simplification. He goes into battle on an equal footing and tries everything he can to create active counterplay, to work up his own initiative. *The possibility of fighting for the initiative is the best modern criterion for determining the value of any opening system, variation or novelty.*

The player who holds the initiative in the opening must constantly endeavour to increase and

consolidate it, so as not to lose it; he must do this until he manages to gain an advantage of a stable kind – such as a material plus, the better endgame, an enduring attack against the king, etc.

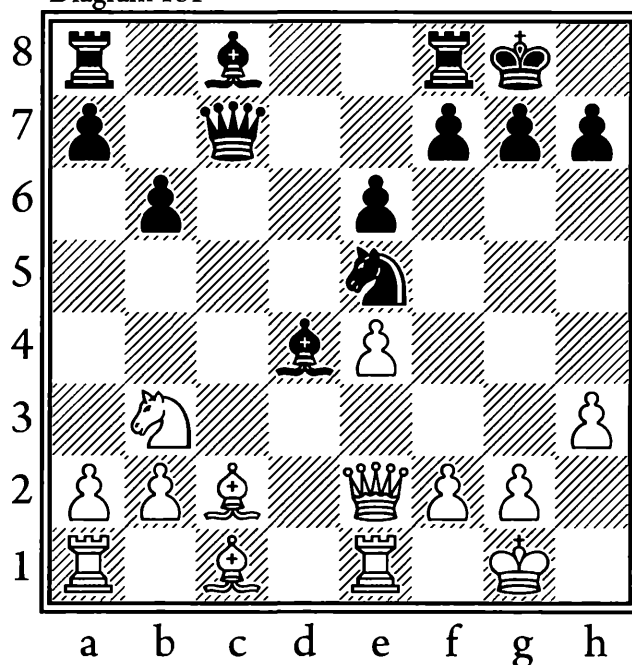
It frequently happens that the initiative can only be seized or maintained by drastic measures such as the sacrifice of a pawn or piece, or a complex combinative regrouping. If we do not resort to these measures in time, the initiative may not only slip away from us – it will very often cross over to our opponent, since the initiative in chess does not like to remain homeless.

S. Khalilbeyli – I. Lipnitsky

Leningrad 1955

1.d4 ♖f6 **2.♗f3** e6 **3.e3** d5 **4.♔d3** c5 **5.c3** ♗c6 **6.♗bd2** ♔d6 **7.0–0** 0–0 **8.dxc5** ♔xc5 **9.e4** ♔c7 **10.♔e2** ♗g4 **11.h3** ♗ge5 **12.♔c2** b6 **13.♖e1** d4 **14.♗xe5** ♗xe5 **15.cxd4** ♔xd4 **16.♗b3**

Diagram 181



Black has the initiative. His minor pieces have seized strong positions in the centre. His queen has taken aim at the kingside from c7 and is exerting pressure on the c-file. But how is he

to maintain this initiative? His bishop on d4 is attacked, and if it retreats to c5 there follows 17. ♖xc5 ♗xc5 18. ♕e3 ♗c7 19. ♖ac1 – when the initiative, which Black has lost, passes to White.

In such cases, looking for a way to develop your initiative further is an especially urgent matter. Here such a possibility exists:

16... ♖a6!

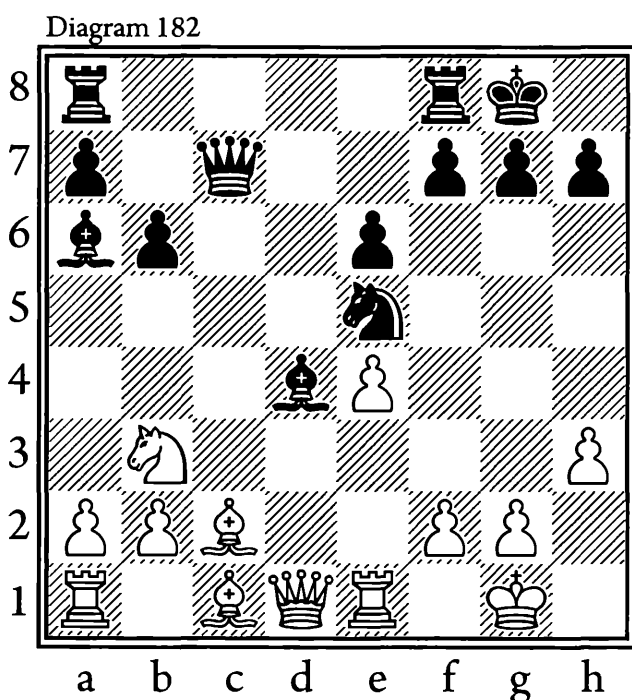
Black seizes an important diagonal with tempo, and constricts White's forces even more.

White cannot take the black bishop, in view of 17. ♗xa6 ♜f3† 18. ♔f1 (after 18. gxf3 ♗g3† White is quickly mated) 18... ♜xe1 19. ♔xe1 ♗xc2 20. ♜xd4 ♗xe4† 21. ♜e2 (21. ♕e3 is even worse, as 21... f5! wins a piece) 21... ♗xg2, and having regained the sacrificed material, Black maintains a very strong attack. He answers 22. ♗a3 with 22... ♗h1† 23. ♔d2 ♖ac8, winning.

In the game, White replied:

17. ♗d1!

Again Black is faced with the same problem of maintaining the initiative, since 16... ♖a6 has not done the trick by itself.



There followed:

17... ♖xf2† 18. ♔xf2 ♖fd8!

This move is the point of the combination. White is forced to place one of his minor pieces in a pin, since the queen is tied to the defence of the bishop on c2.

19. ♕d2 ♜c4

Black plays to win his piece back.

20. e5!

Best! The threat was 20... ♜xd2 and 21... ♗f4†.

20... ♜xd2 21. ♜xd2 ♗c5† 22. ♖e3 ♗b4 23. ♕xh7† ♔f8!

After 23... ♔xh7 24. ♗h5† ♔g8 25. ♜e4 Black would lose the initiative, whereas now it remains with him just as before. He finally wins the knight on d2, since on 24. ♔e1 Black has the decisive 24... ♗d4!!.

The game went:

24. ♔g1 ♗xb2 25. ♗c1 ♖xd2

At the end of it all, Black has emerged with an extra pawn. He might have let the whole combination pass, if the question of keeping or losing the initiative had not confronted him so urgently.

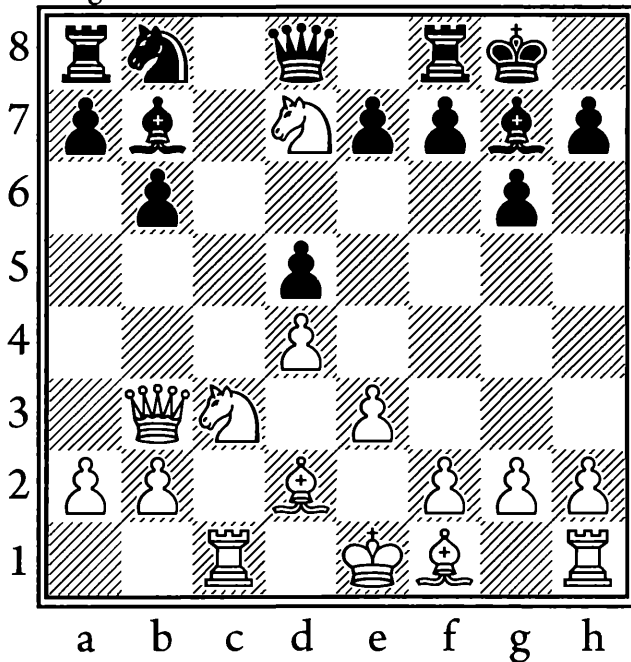
E. Grünfeld – R. Spielmann

Sopron 1934

1. d4 ♜f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♜c3 d5 4. e3 ♕g7 5. ♜f3 0–0 6. ♕d2 c6 7. ♗b3 b6 8. cxd5 cxd5 9. ♖c1 ♕b7 10. ♜e5 ♜fd7 11. ♜xd7

How can Black fight to seize the initiative? It is not easy to do so after 11... ♗xd7, met by 12. ♕b5 and 13. 0–0.

Diagram 183



The answer was given by:

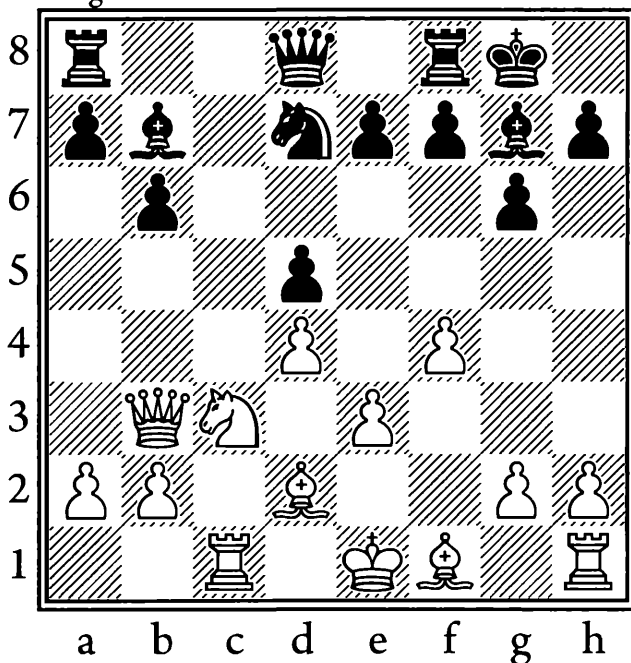
11...Nxd7!

Black sacrifices a pawn, reckoning that in the event of 12.Nxd5 e6 13.Nc3 e5! 14.dxe5 (or 14.d5 Nc5) 14...Nxe5 he can open up the game and immediately start active operations against the white king which is stuck in the centre.

12.f4

White has decided first of all to stop e7-e5 and thus prevent the opening of lines for which he is unprepared.

Diagram 184



12...e5!

Nevertheless!

13.dxe5 Nxe5!! 14.fxe5 d4!

We see the extraordinary measures to which one sometimes has to resort to wrest the initiative from the opponent and to exploit his backward development. Now all the lines in the centre are opened up, and the white king starts to feel quite uncomfortable.

15.Nd1

15.exd4 would be met by the simple 15...Qxd4.

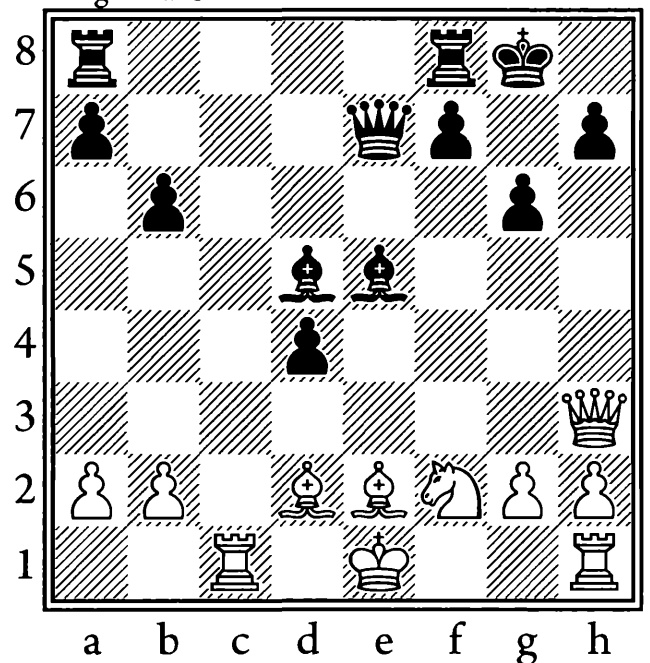
15...Qxe5 16.e4

White sacrifices a pawn to carry out a defensive regrouping of his pieces.

16...Qxe4 17.Nf2 Qd5 18.Qh3 Qe7 19.Qe2

Now White is hoping to castle, but...

Diagram 185



19...d3! 20.Nxd3 Rfe8

White's king is now fixed in the centre for good, and Black's initiative swells into a fearsome attack. The remaining moves of the game were:

21.Qf1 Qxb2 22.Re1 Qf6† 23.Nf2 Qd4

24.♔g3 ♖e4! 25.h4 (or 25.♙d3 ♖g4!)
 25...♖ae8 26.♙b5 ♖xe1† 27.♙xe1 ♖e3
 28.♔g5 ♖xe1† 29.♙xe1 ♔xf2† 30.♙d1
 ♙xg2 31.♖e1 ♙f3† 32.♙e2 ♙c3 33.♙xf3
 ♔xf3† 34.♙c2 ♙xe1
 0–1

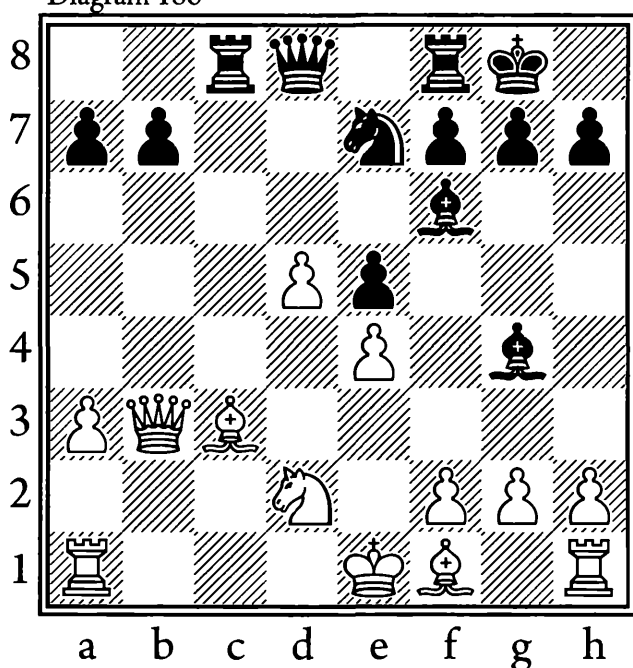
And now here is rather a different case.

G. Bastrikov – V. Kirillov

Vilnius 1949

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4
 5.♔a4† ♘c6 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♙d2 0–0
 8.a3 ♙e7 9.♔c2 ♙f6 10.e4 ♘xc3 11.bxc3
 e5 12.d5 ♘e7 13.c4 c6 14.♙c3 cxd5
 15.cxd5 ♙g4 16.♘d2 ♖c8 17.♔b3

Diagram 186



Up to here, the opening initiative has been with Black. White has not succeeded in completing his development and removing his king to a safe zone, since over the last few moves he has been forced to fend off various threats from his opponent. But how is Black to sustain his initiative?

He should probably open the central files and try to keep the white king in the centre; and this is achieved by:

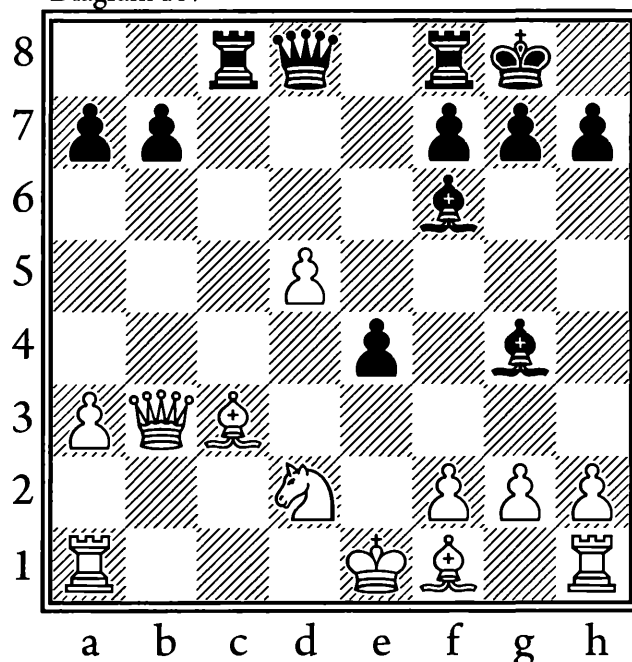
17...♘xd5!

The game continued differently with 17...♔c7 18.♖c1 ♙g5 19.♙e2 ♙xe2 20.♙xe2 ♙h8 21.♖he1 f5 22.exf5 ♔d6 23.♙b4 ♔h6, and Black eventually lost on the 35th move.

18.exd5 e4!

This is better than 18...♖xc3 19.♔xc3 e4 20.♔c1 ♙xa1 21.♔xa1 ♔xd5 22.♙c4!, when White repels his opponent's threats.

Diagram 187



Now Black has the initiative and it is not easy for White to extinguish it. He is at once in big trouble. Black's initiative can easily grow into an attack on the white king, for instance, in the following winning variation:

19.♙xf6 ♔xf6 20.♖b1 e3 21.fxe3 ♖c3
 22.♘e4 ♔h4†!

Thus if, in Grünfeld – Spielmann, Black sacrificed a pawn and then a piece in order to seize the initiative, here Black *ought* to have sacrificed a piece to *sustain* the initiative.

It should be pointed out that a sacrifice for the purpose of gaining the initiative is usually different in kind from a sacrifice that belongs to a combination – where a forced line is envisaged with an objectively favourable outcome.

A sacrifice for the initiative is by its nature a good deal more complex, since in this case you have to place your trust in the general course of the struggle rather than one or two concrete variations. Your opponent is by no means forced to select this or that particular move, in other words he is not so restricted in his choice. You are not basing your play on calculations to regain the sacrificed material in the next few moves – indeed when your opponent offers you such an opportunity, it often pays to refuse it, in order not to forfeit your initiative.

Thus in contrast to cases where the sacrifice is specifically founded on precise calculation, we are dealing here with sacrifices of a positional character, and positional sacrifices are well known to be the most difficult ones. In each particular case the decision basically depends not so much on calculation as on our experience, intuition and faith in our own powers.

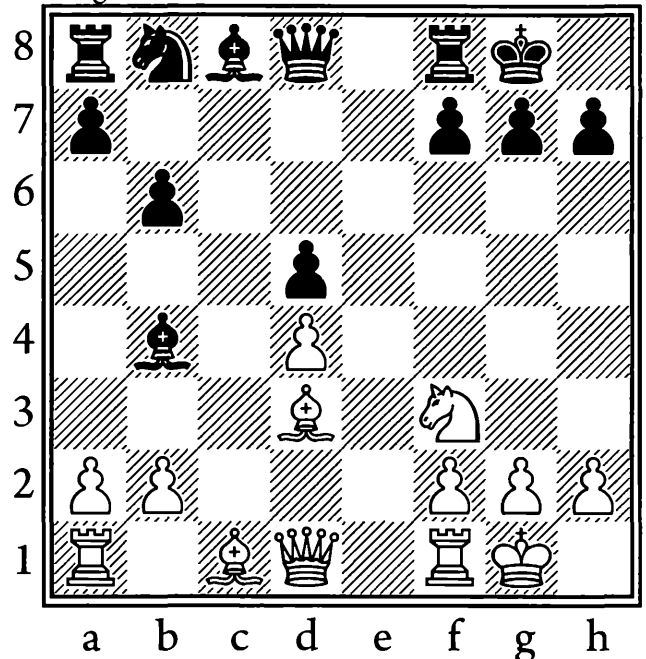
It must not be thought that seizure or retention of the initiative in the opening must constantly involve sacrifices. We should resort to them only when they are indispensable. Time and again, powerful positional moves enable a player to gain or develop the initiative without sacrificing anything. In such cases it is very important to imagine how the opponent can fight against our initiative most effectively, so that we can take account of this in our planning.

I. Lipnitsky – A. Sidorov

Riga 1954

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 c5
5.♘f3 0–0 6.♙d3 d5 7.0–0 b6 8.cxd5
cxd4 9.exd4 ♘xd5 10.♘xd5 exd5

Diagram 188



The initiative is with White (he has possibilities of attacking the black king, while his opponent has no play against the isolated pawn). But how should White increase this initiative, bearing in mind in particular that Black's queenside is still undeveloped?

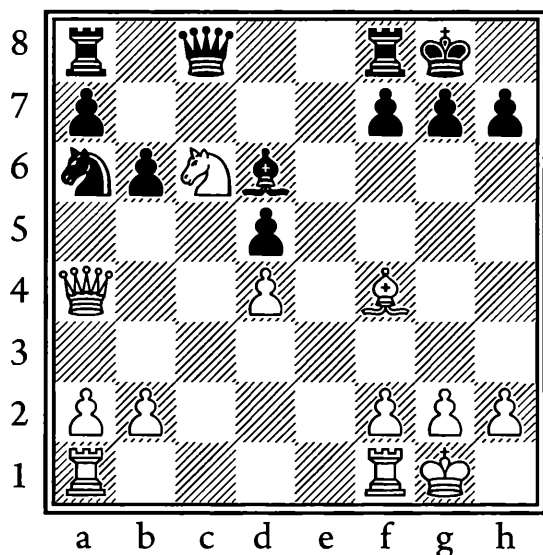
In the first place, the strong positional move 11.♘e5 suggests itself. The following points speak in favour of it:

- (1) The knight establishes itself in the middle of the board, from where it participates in the kingside attack and hampers the development of Black's queenside.
- (2) The d1-h5 diagonal is cleared, allowing White to bring his queen into the attack at once and focus four pieces on the black king.
- (3) Evicting the knight from e5 is very difficult, given that 11...f6 fails to 12.♙h5!, while 11...♘d7 fails to 12.♘c6!.

Going by general considerations, then, we have found an extremely attractive move. But this is merely a "rough survey". What will a more specific and refined survey show us? A concrete investigation into the position brings the reply 11...♙a6! to light, enabling Black to eliminate the powerful white bishop on d3. What then? Should White play 11.♘e5 all the same?

Before taking a decision, we must see whether 11...♔a6 can be refuted. White can try 12.♔xa6 ♘xa6 13.♚a4! ♚c8 14.♘c6 ♔d6 15.♔f4!, when Black cannot take on f4 on account of 16.♘e7†.

Diagram 189



Yet Black has an adequate defence in 15...♚c7!. Were it not for this move, White could decide in favour of 11.♘e5, as there would be a refutation of 11...♔a6. But Black *does* have 15...♚c7 at his disposal. After 16.♔xd6 ♚xd6 17.♖ac1 ♘c7 the position would be simplified to a large extent.

White would still have a slight initiative, but a good deal less than in the position from which we started. Having weighed up all the pros and cons, we reject 11.♘e5, since it does not lead to the further effective development of our initiative. Instead, 11.♚a4! deserves preference.

The white queen occupies this square with gain of tempo. The game continued:

11...♔d6 12.♔g5! ♚d7

This awkward move is forced, as after 12...f6 13.♔h4 there would be holes all over Black's position. Another unpleasant line is 12...♔e7 13.♔xe7 ♚xe7 14.♖fe1, and White seizes the open files with tempo (compare this with the Botvinnik – Alekhine game on page 84).

13.♚c2 h6 14.♔h4 ♘a6

“Well, why not 14...♔a6 now?” the reader may ask. In that case, by means of 15.♔h7†! ♘h8 16.♔f5 ♚c6 17.♖fc1 ♚xc2 18.♖xc2, White could reach a position without queens but with plenty of other pieces, where Black would have great difficulty continuing his development. For example, 18...g6 19.♔f6†! (this is why White needed to check on h7) 19...♔g8 20.♔h3 etc.

Now there followed:

15.a3 ♘c7 16.♘e5 ♔xe5 17.dxe5

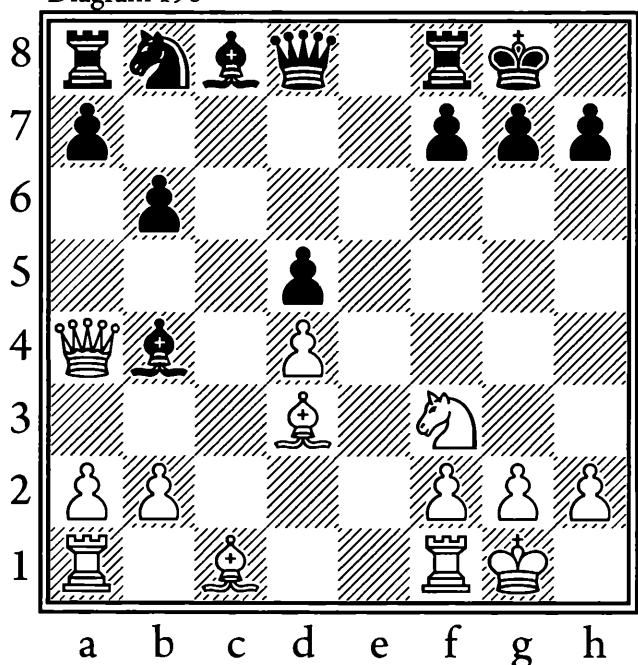
And White's initiative grew into a lasting attack on the kingside.

In conclusion I will give one of the most colourful examples of the development of an opening initiative.

W. Steinitz – C. von Bardeleben

Hastings 1895

Diagram 190



1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♔c4 ♔c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 ♔b4† 7.♘c3 d5 8.exd5 ♘xd5 9.0–0 ♔e6 10.♔g5 ♔e7

White is slightly ahead in development, but Black hopes to castle next move. To exploit White's temporary advantage, some immediate enterprising actions are needed. It is instructive to follow how Steinitz increases his initiative.

11. ♖xd5! ♖xd5

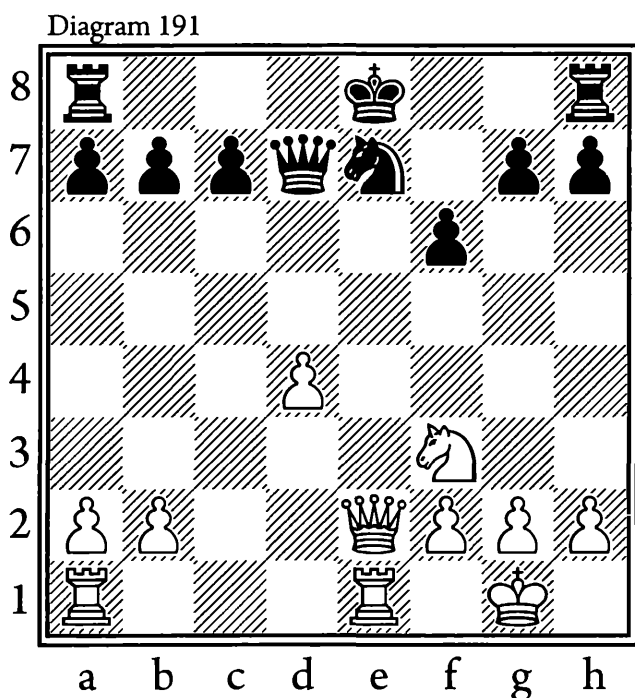
Not 11... ♖xg5 12. ♖xe6 fxe6 13. ♖b3! etc.

12. ♘d5 ♖xd5 13. ♖xe7 ♘xe7 14. ♖e1

By holding the black king in the centre, White has gained time to develop his initiative further.

14...f6

Black attempts to castle artificially. It was no good playing 14... ♖d8 15. ♖e2 ♖d7 (or 15... ♖d6 16. ♖b5† ♖c6 17. ♖b4 etc.) 16. ♘e5 ♖d6 17. ♘g6! ♖e6 18. ♘f4! ♖xe2 19. ♘xd5, and White wins.

15. ♖e2 ♖d7**16. ♖ac1?**

After this natural move Black could have defended with 16... ♔f7!, as 17. ♖xe7† ♖xe7 18. ♖xe7† ♔xe7 19. ♖xc7† ♔d6 20. ♖xg7 ♖ac8 21. g3 ♖c7 would leave him with the better chances. Replying to 16... ♔f7 with 17. ♖e4 would not be dangerous in view of 17... ♘d5! (but not 17...c6 18. ♖f4! 19. ♘e5+ ♔g8 20. ♘xd7 ♘xf4 21. ♘c5 b6 22. ♘e6 ♘d3 23. ♖xc6!! ♘xe1 23. ♖c7!).

Instead of 16. ♖ac1, White could play more enterprisingly with 16. d5! (indicated by I. Maizelis). For example 16... ♔f7 17. ♖ad1:

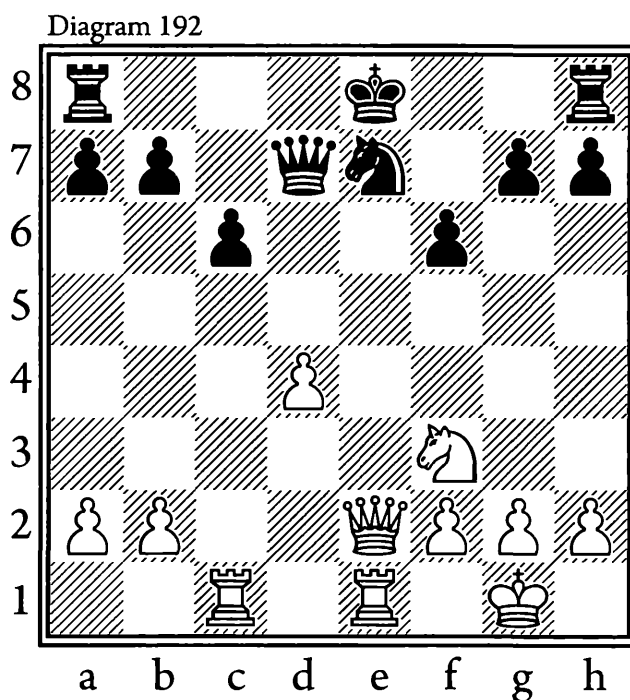
(a) 17... ♘d5 18. ♘g5† f×g5 19. ♖f3† and 20. ♖xd5.

(b) 17... ♖hd8 18. ♘d4 ♘xd5 19. ♘e6 ♖e8 20. ♖h5† and White wins.

(c) 17... ♖he8 18. ♖e6†! ♖xe6 19. d×e6† ♔f8 20. ♖d7 ♖ac8 21. ♘d4 with advantage to White.

16...c6?

As I have said, 16... ♔f7! would have been stronger. But Black probably felt that his position was sturdy enough, as it was far from obvious how White was to increase his initiative.



Indeed at first sight it is hard to see how the regrouping with ... ♔f7 and ... ♖he8 can be prevented, after which the advantage passes to Black. To develop his initiative further, Steinitz must resort to drastic measures.

17. d5!

Sacrificing a pawn, White frees the d4-square so as to bring his knight into the attack.

17...cxd5

Or 17... ♔f7 18. d×c6 ♘xc6 19. ♖cd1, with a strong attack.

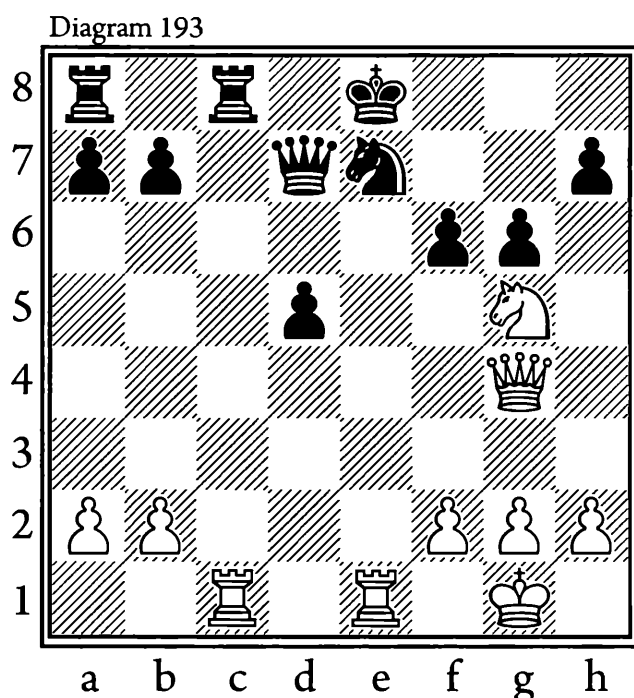
18. ♘d4 ♔f7

White was threatening 19.♘f5.

19.♘e6 ♖hc8 20.♚g4

White's initiative has grown into a direct attack on the black king.

20...g6 21.♘g5† ♔e8



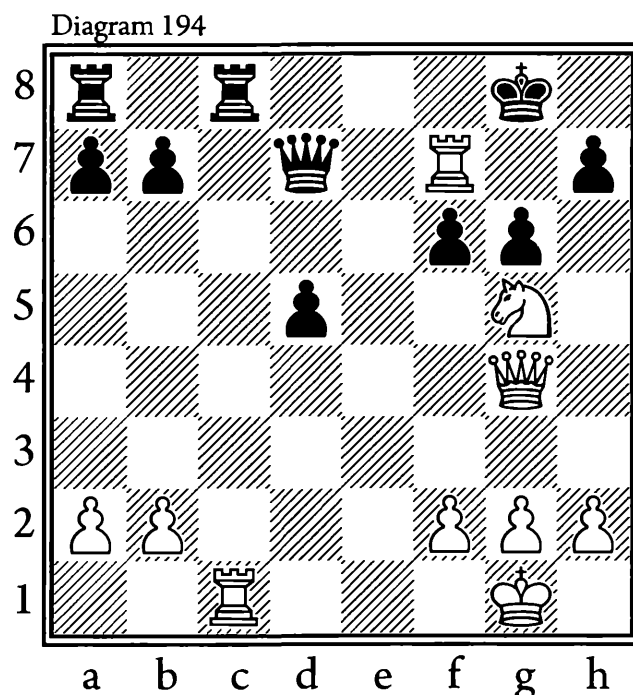
22.♖xe7†!!

A spectacular concluding combination. On 22...♔xe7 (or 22...♚xe7 23.♖xc8† etc.), White plays 23.♖e1† ♔d6 24.♚b4† ♖c5 25.♖e6† and wins.

22...♔f8!

At the moment when White was ready to celebrate victory, an unexpected defence turns up for Black. A rare situation has arisen – all White's pieces are under attack and he is threatened with mate on c1.

23.♖f7† ♔g8



24.♖g7†!!

The undefended white rook is lording it in the rear of Black's position; neither queen nor king can capture it.

24...♔h8

Or 24...♔f8 25.♘h7† etc.

25.♖xh7† ♔g8 26.♖g7† ♔h8 27.♚h4† ♔xg7 28.♚h7† ♔f8 29.♚h8† ♔e7 30.♚g7† ♔e8 31.♚g8† ♔e7 32.♚f7† ♔d8 33.♚f8† ♚e8 34.♘f7† ♔d7 35.♚d6 mate

In this game White's opening initiative gradually grew into a brilliant combinative attack.

Chapter 12

Modern Gambits

All the advantages that come from possessing the initiative are obvious – among chessplayers there are no two opinions about this. They are more interested in something else – how this possession of the initiative can be acquired in the opening stage. Of the ways to fight for an opening initiative, gambits (from the Italian *dare il gambetto*, “to trip someone up”) are among the oldest.

The label of *gambits* has been attached since time immemorial to a method of play in which one or two pawns (more rarely a piece) are sacrificed at the start of the game for the sake of the fastest possible mobilization and attack. Making his opponent concentrate on defending the material gained, the player offering the gambit would try to make use of the time to secure a preponderance of forces in a particular part of the board, so as to mount a direct attack on the king.

Such gambits were seen in countless games up to the start of the 20th century. “Forward! Go for the king!” were the gambit players’ watchwords.

As long as defensive technique was in a very feeble state, gambits flourished. Players would shrink from no sacrifices to seize the initiative and attack the opponent’s king head-on. Thus, masters of gambit play recalled warriors setting

off into battle with “Death or glory!” as their parting words.

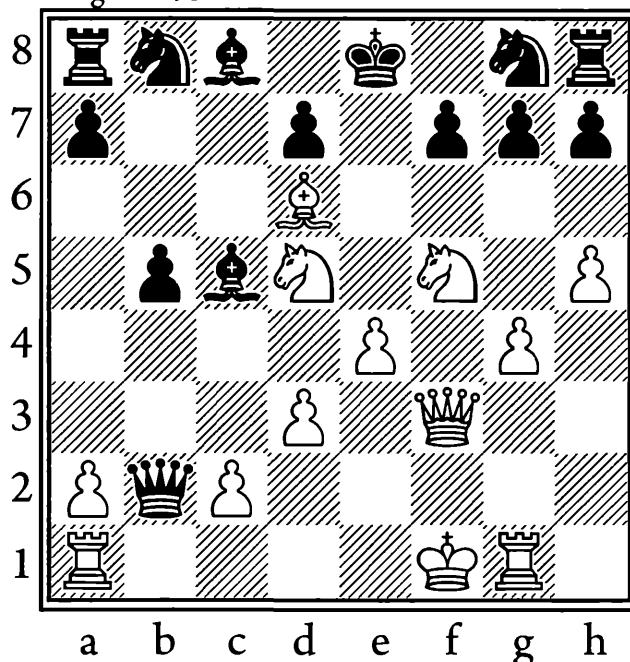
The next game is a paradigm of gambit play from the past.

A. Anderssen – L. Kieseritzky

London 1851

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘c4 ♔h4† 4.♔f1 b5 5.♙xb5 ♘f6 6.♘f3 ♔h6 7.d3 ♘h5 8.♘h4 ♔g5 9.♘f5 c6 10.♙g1! cxb5 11.g4 ♘f6 12.h4 ♔g6 13.h5 ♔g5 14.♙f3 ♘g8 15.♙xf4 ♙f6 16.♘c3 ♙c5 17.♘d5 ♙xb2 18.♙d6

Diagram 195



18...♔xa1† 19.♖e2 ♕xg1 20.e5!! ♘a6
21.♘xg7† ♔d8 22.♗f6†! ♘xf6 23.♕e7
mate

This game, on which Anderssen's contemporaries bestowed the title of "The Immortal", has aroused the admiration of chessplayers for more than a hundred years now.

Indeed White's "heroism" in sacrificing almost his entire "army" to achieve victory creates an immense impression to this day. And yet how helpless Black's defensive play appears to us! He seems to have considered it a matter of honour to take every sacrifice that was offered to him, at the price of wholly neglecting the principle of mobilizing his forces.

By contrast, in the following game White's "daredevil" play comes to grief. Black accepts all the sacrifices and then repulses the attack.

J. Mieses – M. Chigorin

Hanover 1902

1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 dxc3

The immediate 3...d5! is not bad.

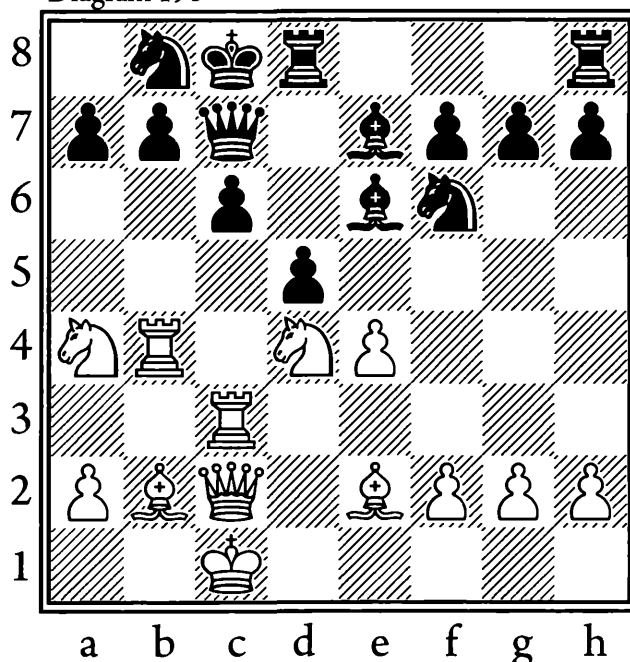
4.♕c4 cxb2 5.♕xb2 ♔e7 6.♘c3 c6 7.♗c2
d6!

Not 7...d5? 8.♕xd5.

8.0–0–0 ♕e6 9.♕e2 ♘d7 10.♘f3 ♘c5
11.♖d4 0–0–0 12.♖hd1 ♗c7 13.♘a4
♘d7! 14.♖1d3 ♘gf6 15.♖c3 ♕e7 16.♖b4
♘b8 17.♘d4 d5!

Black goes over to counterplay.

Diagram 196



18.♘xc6

In view of the threats of ...♕xb4 and ...♘xe4, White has no choice but to stake his all.

18...♘xc6 19.♕a6 ♗f4† 20.♖e3 ♕xb4
21.♗xc6† ♗c7 22.♕xb7† ♔b8 23.♕e5
♗xe5 24.♖b3 ♗c7

Bereft of half his "troops", White resigned the game.

As the methods of positional play were developed, there was an improvement in the art of passive defence and, most importantly, players would strive to replace such defence with active resistance and the launching of a counter-attack. There was a sharp increase in the possibilities for fighting successfully against gambits. On the one hand, this meant whittling down the opponent's attacking forces. On the other hand, more and more often, it meant counter-sacrificing at a suitable moment to take the struggle in a new direction.

The use of gambits began to bring fewer and fewer laurels. This significantly cooled the ardour of gambit enthusiasts, and gambit openings gradually started disappearing from tournament practice.

The greatest masters of gambit play, presenting the world with unfading icons of chess art,

were Anderssen, Morphy and Chigorin. After the death of Morphy and Anderssen, in the period when the methods of positional warfare held sway everywhere, Chigorin was virtually the only one of the great masters who continued with unflagging persistence – and with plenty of success – to play various gambits in games of the highest importance.

Let us recall that in his matches with Steinitz, Chigorin employed gambit systems twenty-five times (!) – and this against the World Champion who had raised defensive chess to very great heights. The overall score from these encounters was $+14 -6 =5$ in Chigorin's favour.

No wonder that in 1903, when a special gambit tournament was held in Vienna with the rule that every game had to start with the King's Gambit Accepted, Chigorin came a brilliant first by a margin of $1\frac{1}{2}$ points. In 1903 he won a six-game gambit match ($+2 -1 =3$) against the then World Champion Lasker.

How can we explain the fact that Chigorin employed gambits so successfully in the most crucial encounters, just when the vast majority of the day's top players were renouncing the gambit style of opening play? (Exceptions, I dare say, were Charousek, Mieses and later Spielmann.)

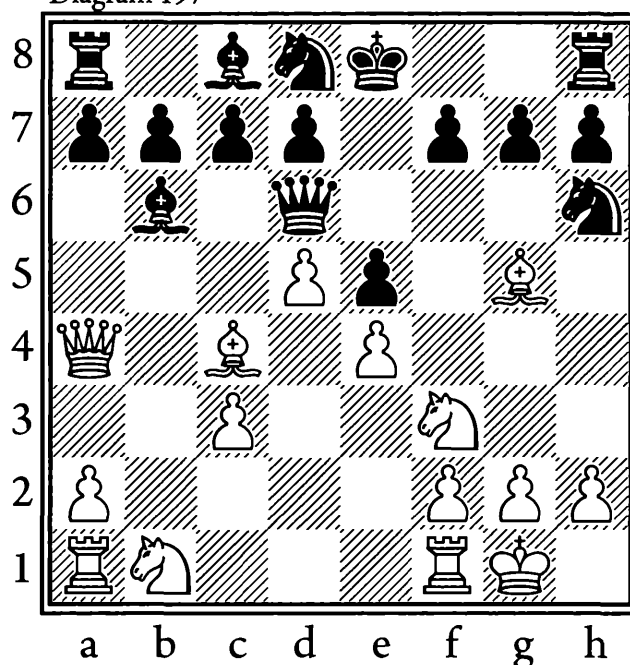
The best answer to this question is given by Chigorin's games themselves. The great Russian player was able to inject new substance into the gambit form. Not an impetuous king attack to which everything is sacrificed, but a lasting initiative on an all-embracing scale – this is the point of Chigorin's treatment of gambit schemes. Seizure of the initiative, you will agree, is an extremely broad aim. And in the hands of Chigorin, a player of such inexhaustible imagination and ingenuity, the initiative was doubly dangerous.

M. Chigorin – W. Steinitz

Cable match (1st game), 1890-91

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.b4 ♙xb4 5.c3 ♙a5 6.0-0 ♚f6 7.d4 ♘h6 8.♙g5 ♚d6 9.d5 ♘d8 10.♚a4 ♙b6

Diagram 197



Given that the two players held opposing views on this line of the Evans Gambit, the game is a special kind of creative duel.

Black has an extra pawn. It is hard for White to open up lines for an attack on the black king, which is fairly securely placed. It is easy to see that in this situation White has no sharp attack in the gambit style. But something else is also obvious: White has a lasting initiative on every part of the board. Chigorin demonstrates that this more than makes up for the sacrificed pawn.

There followed:

11.♘a3 c6

Black guards b5 against an incursion by the white knight.

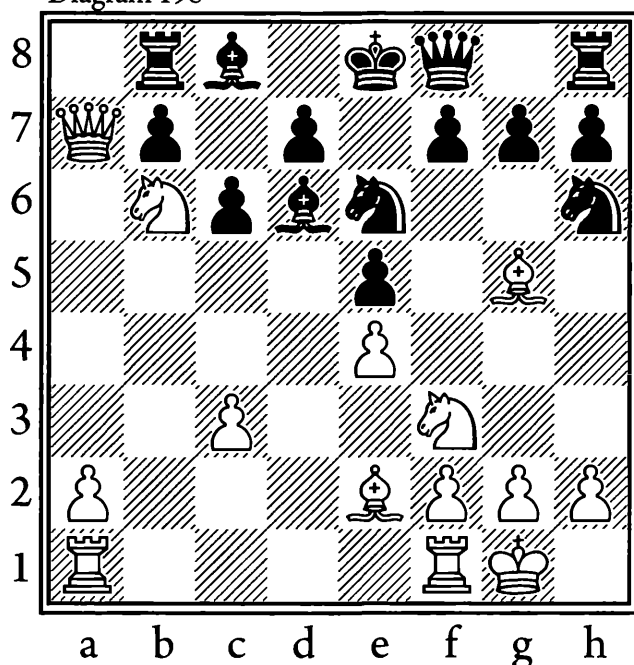
12.♙e2!

To bring the knight into the attack via c4.

12...♔c7 13.♘c4 ♔f8 14.d6! ♔xd6
15.♘b6 ♖b8 16.♔xa7 ♘e6

White can already regain his pawn by exchanging on c8. But what Chigorin had in mind when he played the gambit was not to lend his opponent a pawn but to sacrifice it for the initiative. Developing this initiative further is White's chief task at the moment. It is for the sake of this that he refrains from winning his pawn back.

Diagram 198



17.♔c1!

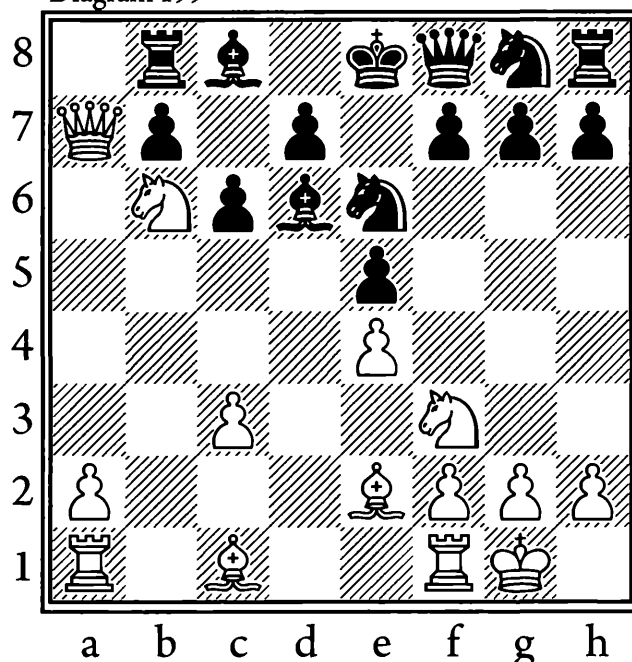
Chigorin brings his bishop across from g5 to a3, with a threat to win the exchange or induce a further weakening of Black's position.

17...♘g8

The overwhelming majority of modern chess-players would, like Chigorin, prefer White here. Steinitz's assessment of the situation is all the more intriguing:

"I consider that now, that is after Black's 17th move, my position is better than it was at the start of the game, and I am ready to lay odds of two to one that my opponent will not win. In other words I undertake to draw at least."

Diagram 199



18.♔a3! c5

Forced in view of the threat of 19.♔xb8.

19.♖ad1 ♘f6 20.♔c4 ♔c7 21.♘d5! ♔d6
22.♘h4!

White's pieces have taken control of the whole board.

22...♘xd5 23.♘f5! g6 24.♘xd6† ♔xd6
25.♔xd5 ♔c7 26.♔xe6 fxe6 27.♔xc5

Thanks to the threat of 28.♔d6, Black's position is hopeless. Eleven moves later, whether he liked it or not, Steinitz had to repudiate the pledge he had given about the outcome of the game.

By repeatedly refraining from immediate attacks on the king in favour of a strategy of long-term pressure, Chigorin introduced a new style of play to gambit openings.

We should note that the gambiteer's development of his initiative is founded on the specific positional advantages (a lead in development, conquest of greater space, weaknesses in the opponent's camp, central preponderance, etc.) for the sake of which the gambit was offered.

Gambit ideas underwent further evolution in the hands of another Russian genius – Alexander Alekhine – who popularized their

application to closed and semi-closed openings. Sacrificing a pawn for the initiative became a favourite strategic device of Alekhine's. The successes he achieved drew the attention of the entire chess world to this idea.

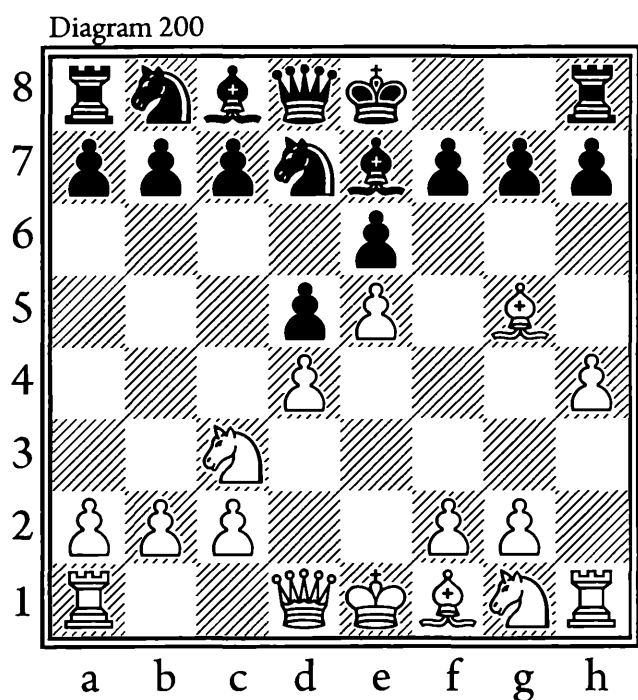
We will consider some examples of how Alekhine first of all employs a gambit to seize the initiative and then, throughout the game, in determined fashion, works this initiative up into a devastating attack on the king.

A. Alekhine – H. Fahrni

Mannheim 1914

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 ♙e7
5.e5 ♘fd7 6.h4!

The French enthusiast Chatard's move.



Alekhine's opponent accepted the pawn sacrifice lightly, as he did not see what sort of attack White would obtain in return.

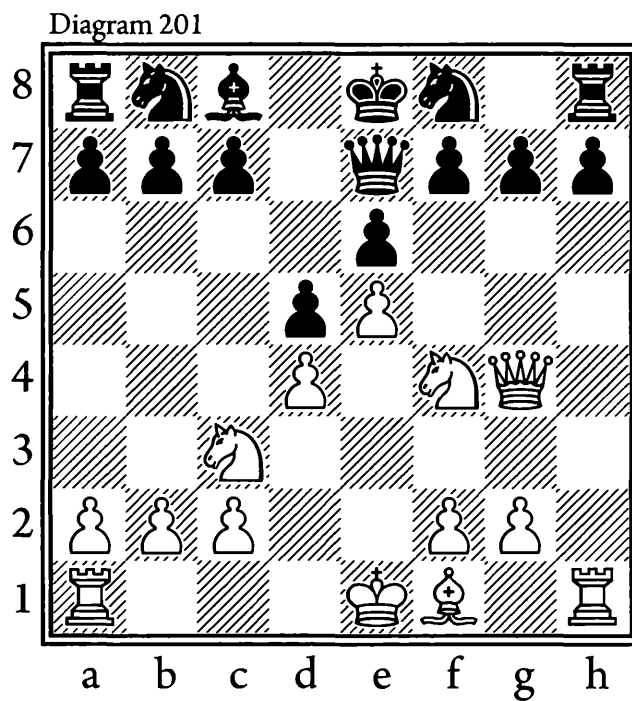
The game continued:

6...♙xg5 7.hxg5 ♙xg5 8.♘h3 ♙e7

"After 8...♙h6 the black queen would be boxed in. White could then gradually strengthen his position with 9.g3 and 10.♙g2." (Alekhine)

This note alone brilliantly reveals the essence of the new way of treating a gambit. After all, according to the old assumptions, the words *gambit* and *gradually* were mutually exclusive: a gambit was associated with the notion of *immediacy*.

9.♘f4 ♘f8 10.♙g4!



The first result is to hand. Thanks to the threats of 11.♙xg7 and 11.♘xd5, Black is compelled to make the following move which weakens his position.

10...f5 11.exf6 gxf6 12.0-0-0!

White presses on with his development and renews the threat of ♘xd5.

12...c6 13.♙e1 ♘d8

Black is already in considerable difficulties; on 13...♙d7, White again has 14.♘xd5.

14.♙h6!

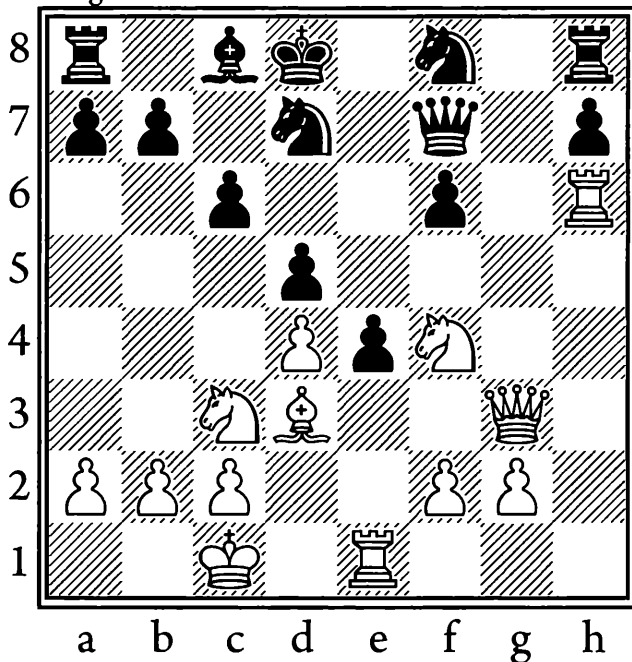
White's initiative is mounting.

14...e5 15.♙h4 ♘bd7 16.♙d3 e4
17.♙g3!

Again White threatens 18.♘xd5, and as Alekhine shows, 17...♙d6 would be met by 18.♙xe4 dxe4 19.♙xe4! when 20.♙g7 cannot be averted.

17...♔f7

Diagram 202



18.♕xe4!

White's initiative grows into a decisive attack against the king.

18...dxe4 19.♘xe4 ♖g8 20.♗a3!

With his characteristic brilliance Alekhine concludes the fight in the shortest number of moves.

20...♗g7 21.♘d6! ♘b6 22.♘e8! ♗f7 23.♗d6†

And mate in two.

In the following game, Alekhine introduced the Soviet Master Blumenfeld's gambit into international tournament practice.

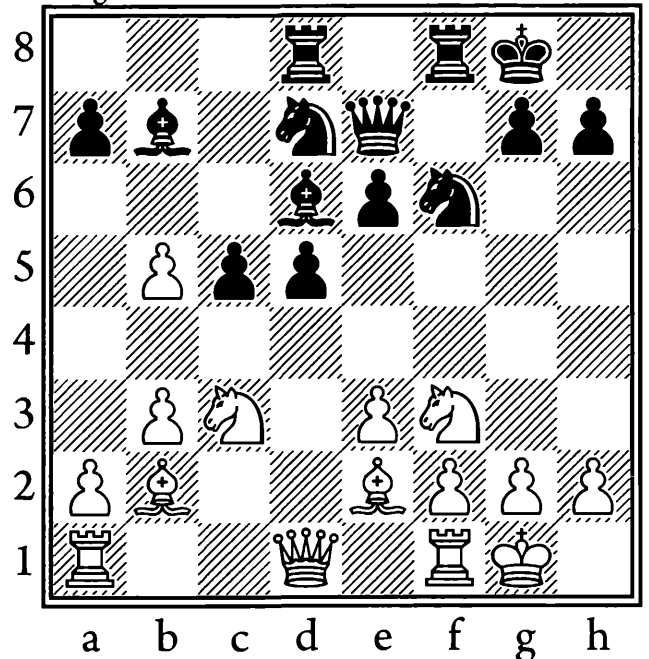
S. Tarrasch – A. Alekhine

Pistyan 1922

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 c5 4.d5 b5!? 5.dxe6 fxe6 6.cxb5 d5 7.e3 ♕d6 8.♘c3 0-0 9.♕e2 ♕b7 10.b3 ♘bd7 11.♕b2 ♗e7 12.0-0 ♖ad8

Black has sacrificed a pawn in order to deploy his pieces comfortably and obtain a mobile pawn centre.

Diagram 203



Again it is easy to see that Black does not have any direct onslaught in return for his pawn. He has, however, all the preconditions for assuming and developing a long-term initiative.

13.♗c2 e5 14.♖fe1 e4 15.♘d2 ♘e5 16.♘d1

White has entirely switched to defence.

16...♘fg4 17.♕xg4

17.♘f1 would be met by 17...♘f3†! 18.gxf3 exf3, and White is in big trouble.

17...♘xg4 18.♘f1 ♗g5!

Alekhine probes the weakest link in the white king's cover – g2. The threat is ♘g4-h6-f5-h4.

19.h3 ♘h6 20.♖h1 ♘f5 21.♘h2

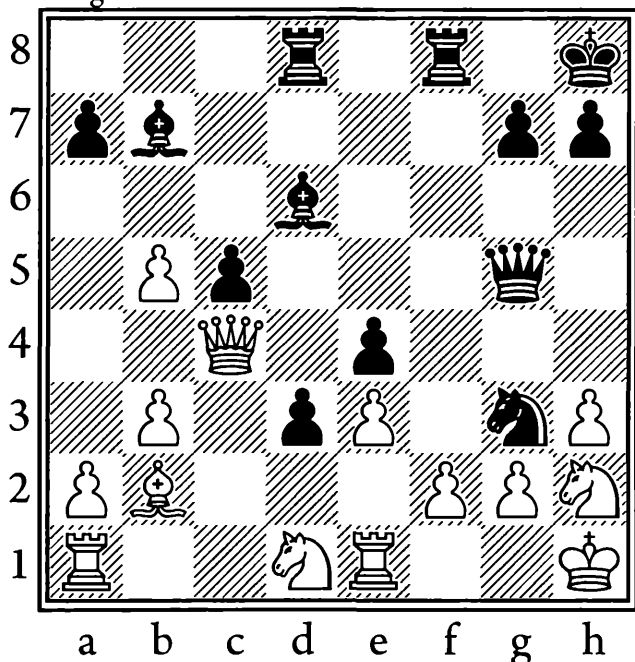
White has managed to regroup for the defence of g2, but Alekhine increases the pressure with a drive in the centre.

21...d4! 22.♕c1

Or 22.exd4 e3! etc.

22...d3 23.♗c4† ♖h8 24.♕b2 ♘g3†!

Diagram 204



Black has taken over the whole board.

25. ♖g1

Of course not 25. fxg3 ♜xg3 26. ♘f1 ♞xf1+ and 27... ♜h2 mate.

25... ♙d5 26. ♜a4 ♘e2+

This is the use Black has for the pawn on d3.

27. ♖h1 ♞f7 28. ♜a6 h5 29. b6 ♘g3+!
30. ♖g1 axb6 31. ♜xb6 ♘e2+ 32. ♖h1
♘g3+ 33. ♖g1 d2

Now White suffers material losses.

34. ♞f1 ♘xf1 35. ♘xf1 ♙e6!

The start of the final mating attack.

36. ♖h1

Alekhine had envisaged a spectacular finish in the event of 36. ♜c6 ♞f3! 37. ♜xe4 ♙d5 38. ♜a4 ♜xg2+!! 39. ♖xg2 ♞g3+ and mate in three moves.

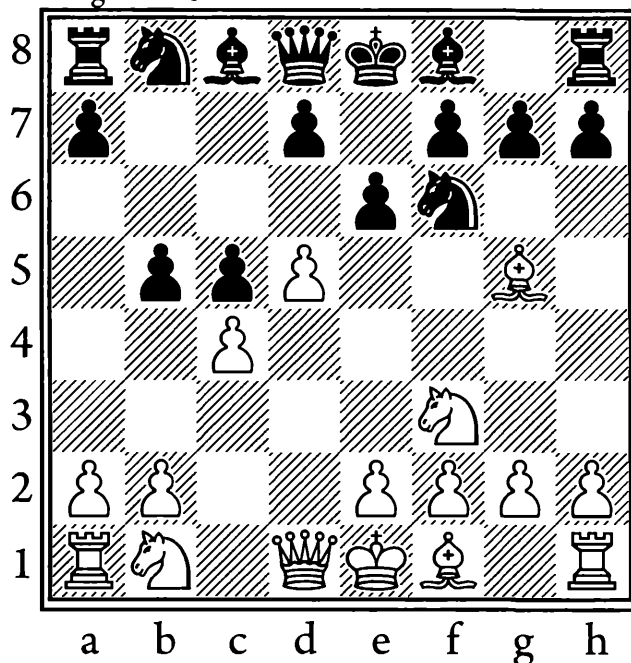
36... ♙xh3! 37. gxh3 ♞f3 38. ♘g3 h4
39. ♙f6 ♜xf6 40. ♘xe4 ♞xh3+
0-1

This game spurred White to look for other paths in this variation: accepting the gambit was acknowledged to be very dangerous.

The reader probably noticed that Black's initiative arose organically from his strong position

in the centre, the zone that White neglected by accepting the gambit. Today the Blumenfeld Gambit (1. d4 ♘f6 2. ♘f3 e6 3. c4 c5 4. d5 b5) is rarely used, since White can successfully decline it by continuing the fight for the centre with 5. ♙g5!

Diagram 205



For example, 5... exd5 6. cxd5 h6 7. ♙xf6 ♜xf6 8. ♜c2 d6 9. e4 a6 10. a4! b4 11. ♘fd2! ♙e7 12. ♘c4 ♘d7 13. ♘bd2 0-0 14. ♙d3 with advantage to White (Lipnitsky – Tolush, Moscow 1950).

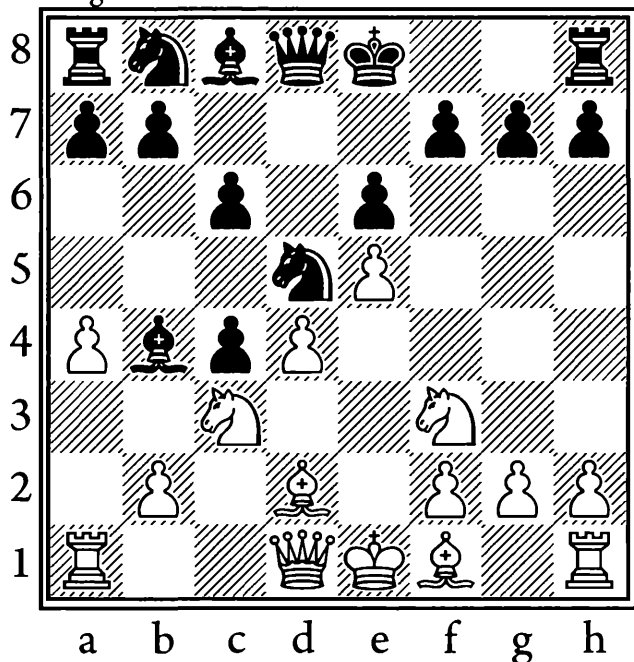
Alekhine's use of gambit ideas was broadly elucidated by Grandmaster Alexander Kotov in his book on the former Champion. What I wish to do here is trace the subsequent fruitful development of these ideas in the games of Soviet players.

A. Alekhine – E. Bogoljubow

Wiesbaden (1) 1929

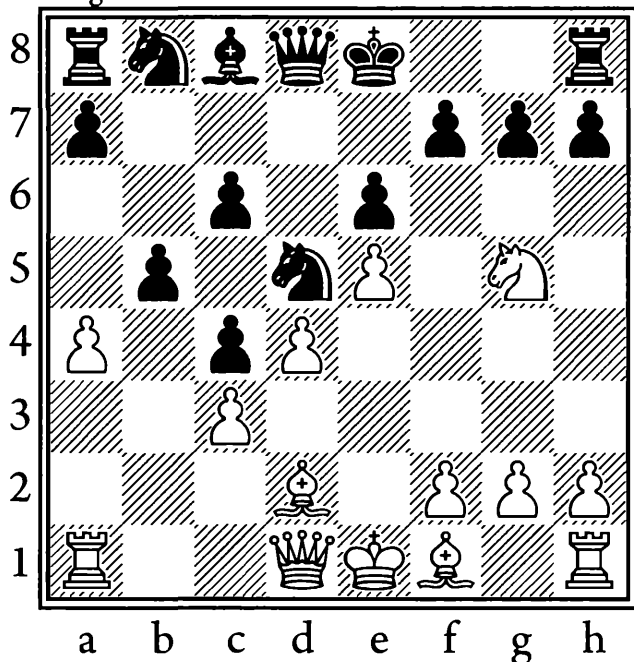
1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. ♘f3 ♘f6 4. ♘c3 dxc4
5. a4 e6 6. e4! ♙b4 7. e5 ♘d5 8. ♙d2

Diagram 206



As is well known, in the vast majority of Queen's Gambit games White regains the gambit pawn. This time, Alekhine turns the pseudo-gambit into a *real* gambit. In order to hold the extra pawn, Bogoljubow played **8...♙xc3** (it would have been better to return the pawn but retain his bishop, by 8...b5 9.♘e4 ♙e7 10. b3 ♘d7) **9.bxc3 b5**, and after **10.♘g5!** he landed in insuperable difficulties.

Diagram 207



What indeed is Black to play? On 10...0-0, White has 11.♚b1! winning the pawn on b5; nor will 10...♘xc3 do, because of 11.♚f3!. After 10...h6 or 10...♚d7, White continues 11.♘e4! with threats of ♘d6† and ♚g4. The

absence of his dark-squared bishop proves fatal to Black.

10...f6 11.exf6 ♘xf6 12.♙e2 a6 13.♙f3! h6 14.♙h5† ♘xh5 15.♚xh5†

White now obtains an irresistible attack against the black king.

15...♙d7 16.♘f7 ♚e8 17.♚g6! ♙g8 18.♙f4 ♙b7 19.♙g3 ♙e7 20.♙d6† ♙d7 21.0-0 c5 22.dxc5 ♙d5 23.axb5 axb5 24.♙xa8 ♙xa8 25.♙a1 ♘c6 26.♘e5†! 1-0

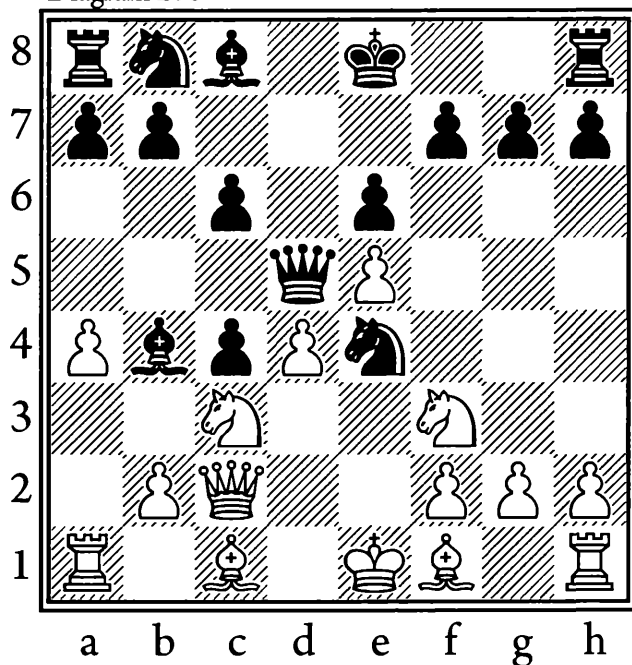
Assessing this whole gambit line as favourable to White, Alekhine wrote in his notes to Black's fifth move (e7-e6):

"It has been my particular luck that this illogical move (instead of the natural 5...♙f5) has been adopted against me, with disastrous effect, no less than four times..."

The other three of those games were identical after 8 moves:

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4 e6 6.e4 ♙b4 7.e5 ♘e4 8.♚c2 ♚d5

Diagram 208



Alekhine – Euwe (19th World Championship match game, Holland 1935) continued: **9.♙e2 c5 10.0-0 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 cxd4 12.cxd4 c3**

13.♔d2!, regaining the pawn with an advantage in development.

Alekhine – Bogoljubow (Nottingham 1936) varied at move 12 with **12.♘xd4 ♕c5 13.♘f3! ♘d7 14.♖d1 ♖c6 15.♙xc4 0–0 16.♘g5 g6 17.♙b5 ♖c7 18.♘e4**, and White had the advantage.

Alekhine – Helling (Dresden 1936) went **9.♙e2 0–0 10.0–0 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♙e7 12.♘d2 c5 13.♙xc4 ♖d8 14.♖e4! cxd4 15.cxd4 ♙d7 16.♙d3 g6 17.♙a3! ♙c6 18.♖g4**, with an attack.

When examining Lipnitsky – Lenchiner (page 145), we shall meet what from Black's viewpoint is a slightly more favourable version of this line.

Developing Alekhine's idea from the above games, the Soviet players Tolush and Geller discovered the possibility of employing this dangerous gambit a move earlier, that is before Black has the opportunity for ♙c8-f5.

E. Geller – W. Unzicker

Stockholm 1952

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.e4! b5 6.e5 ♘d5 7.a4 e6

This time, by contrast with the Alekhine games we have looked at, Black has a pawn on b5 instead of a bishop on b4. This is very much a point in his favour, since the bishop on f8 plays an important role in defence. Consequently the tasks facing White are more involved.

8.axb5 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 cxb5 10.♘g5!

Once again, this knight sortie is the best continuation.

10...♙b7 11.♖h5 g6

A major weakening of Black's position, but **11...♖d7** would be answered by **12.♘h7!**

with the threat of ♘f6†. There could follow **12...♔d8 13.♖g5† ♖e7 14.♘xf8 ♖xg5 15.♙xg5†** and **16.♘xe6**, and White comes out a pawn up.

It would be interesting to try **11...♖c7 12.♘h7 ♘d7 13.♘f6† gxf6 14.♖xh8 0–0–0**.

12.♖g4 ♙e7 13.♙e2 ♘d7 14.♙f3!

It is interesting that this move also featured in the Alekhine – Bogoljubow game (see page 137).

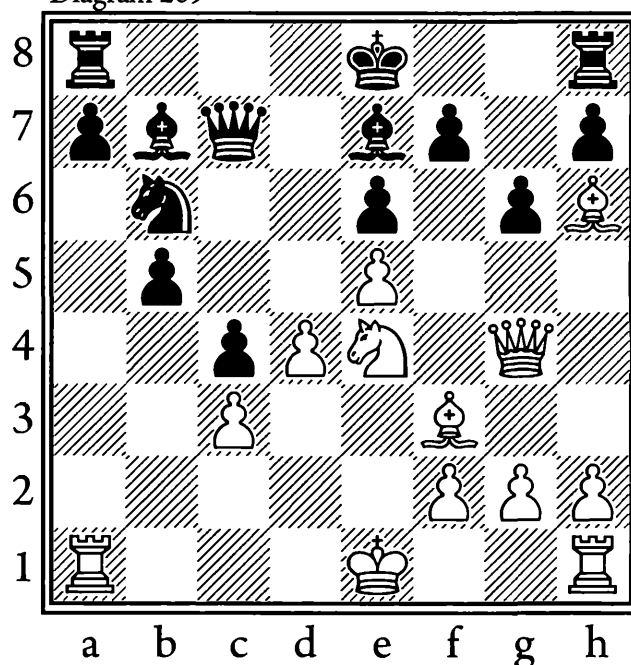
14...♖c7

Or **14...♙xf3 15.♖xf3 0–0 16.h4!**, giving White a strong attack.

15.♘e4 ♘b6 16.♙h6

White has captured the initiative.

Diagram 209



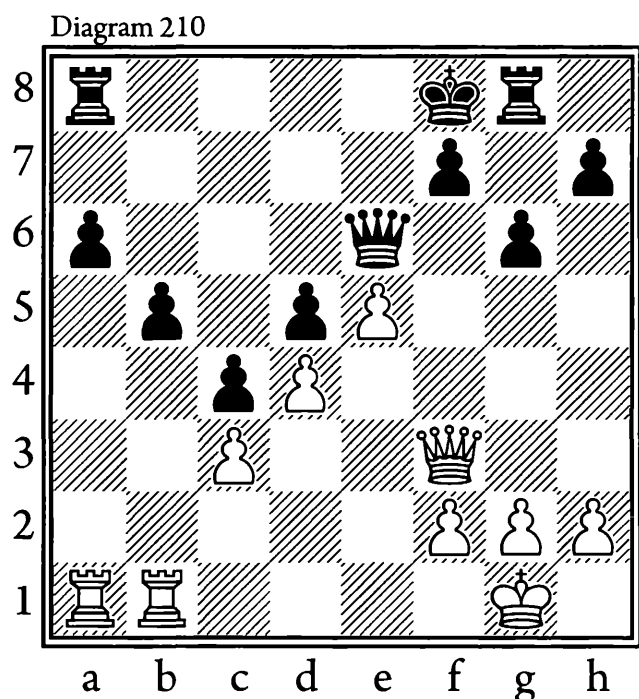
16...♖g8

Black has gone right over to the defensive. He should have tried to sharpen the struggle by means of **16...b4!?**. For example **17.♙g7 ♖g8 18.♘f6† ♙xf6 19.♙xf6 b3!**, or **17.cxb4 ♙xb4† 18.♔f1 ♙e7!**.

17.♙g5 ♙xe4 18.♙xe4 ♘d5 19.♙xd5 exd5 20.♙xe7 ♖xe7 21.0–0

An intriguing position. Black has exchanged off all the minor pieces and retained his pawn, but he has *not* succeeded in reducing White's initiative.

21...♔f8 22.♖fb1 a6 23.♙f3! ♔e6



24.♙f6!

Cutting off the black king's escape squares, White forces the win. The remaining moves were:

24...♙c8

Or 24...♙xf6 25.exf6 g5 26.♖xb5 ♖g6 27.♖xa6! etc.

25.f4 ♙b7 26.♖a5 ♔e8 27.♖ba1 b4

It's too late for this now.

28.cxb4 ♙xb4 29.♖xd5 ♙b7 30.e6 1-0

Geller is undoubtedly the finest connoisseur of this interesting gambit, which he has enriched with some new ideas that merit close attention.

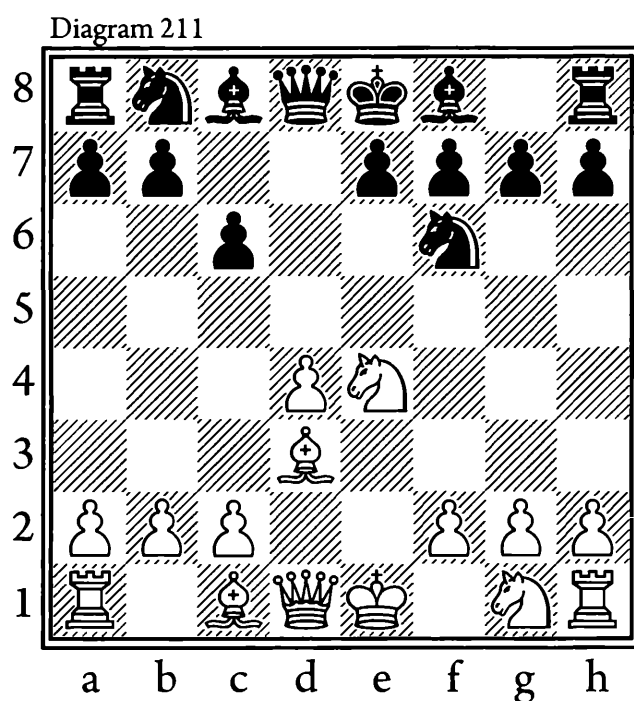
Now, another example of how Alekhine's ideas have been developed further.

A. Alekhine – W. Winter

Hastings 1936

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘f6 5.♙d3

This unexpected pawn sacrifice was recommended by Tarrasch. The game continued:



5...♙xd4 6.♘f3 ♙d8 7.♙e2 ♘xe4 8.♙xe4 ♘d7 9.0-0 ♘c5 10.♖d1 ♙c7 11.♘e5!

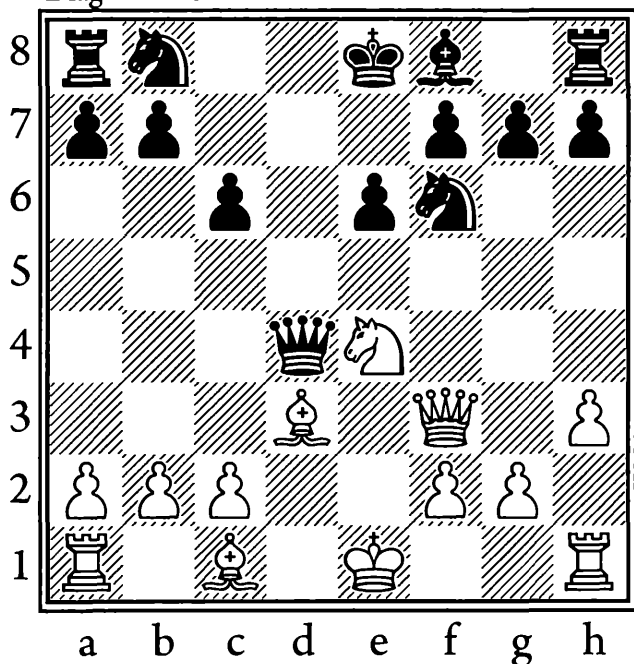
We have before us a typical gambit employed in a semi-open game. As in the other examples I have cited, the compensation here takes the form of a lasting initiative, which eventually grew into an attack against the king and brought White victory.

Starting from this idea, Isaac Boleslavsky cultivates an analogous pawn sacrifice in the Caro-Kann and uses it in his games:

1.e4 c6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♘f3 ♙g4 4.h3 ♙xf3 5.♙xf3 e6 6.d4 ♘f6 7.♙d3! dxe4 8.♘xe4 ♙xd4

Obviously the idea that we just looked at is being repeated here, albeit in a somewhat different setting.

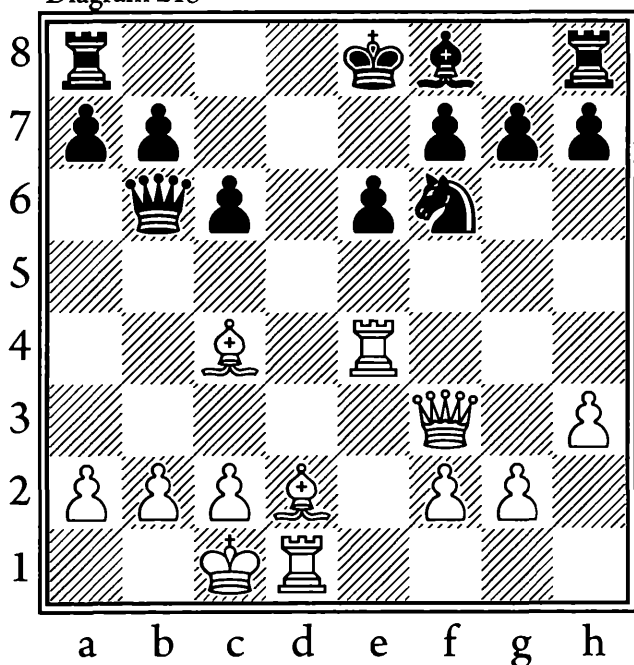
Diagram 212



In Boleslavsky – Makogonov (Moscow 1940), White obtained an enduring initiative after 9.♙e3. Makogonov continued 9...♙b4† 10.♖e2 ♜d8 11.♞hd1 ♞xe4 12.♙xe4 ♜e7 13.♖f1 0–0 14.♞g3!, and White’s initiative finally won the game.

Boleslavsky – Flohr (Moscow 1950) went: 9.♙e3 ♜d8 10.0–0–0 ♞bd7 11.♙c4 ♜a5 12.♙d2 ♜b6 13.♞he1 ♞xe4 14.♞xe4 ♞f6

Diagram 213



Black’s last move permits White to play this modern gambit in the “good old” style.

15.♙xe6!! fxe6 16.♞xe6† ♙e7!

The experienced tournament warrior Flohr prefers to hand back the piece and remain a pawn down, rather than watch his position be demolished in spectacular fashion after 16...♖f7 17.♞xf6† gxf6 18.♞h5† ♖g8 19.♞g4† ♖f7 20.♞c4† ♖g6 21.♞e4† ♖f7 22.♙a5!! ♞c5 23.♞d7† ♙e7 24.♙b4. He would also lose with 16...♖d7 17.♞f5! etc.

17.♞de1 ♞d5 18.♙g5 0–0–0 19.♙xe7 ♞xe7 20.♞xe7

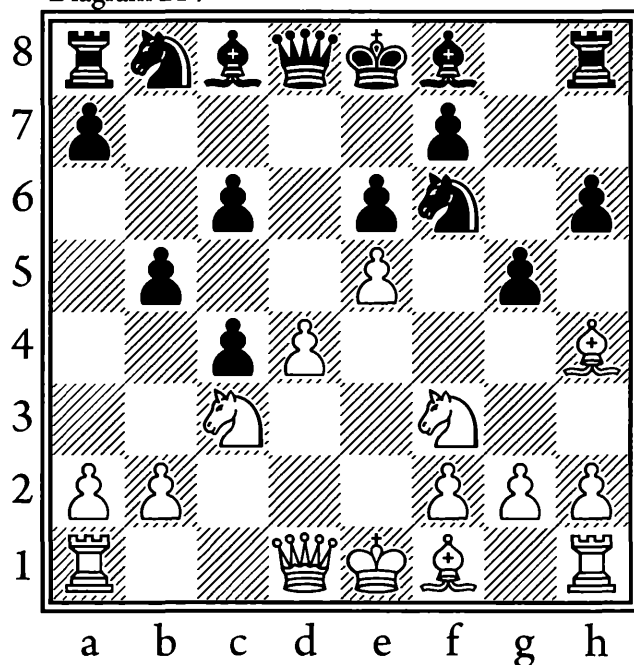
And White converted his extra pawn into a win.

Creatively developing the heritage of Chigorin and Alekhine, Soviet players have also enriched many other opening systems with original gambit ideas.

In the Queen’s Gambit, the Botvinnik System abounds in interesting concepts:

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.♞f3 e6 5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5

Diagram 214



A most fascinating position which can satisfy adherents of attack and defence alike. The point is that White can choose between offering a gambit or accepting one himself.

D. Bronstein – M. Botvinnik

Moscow 1951

Making the former choice, White continues:

9.exf6 gxh4 10.♘e5 ♔xf6 11.g3 ♘d7 12.♔e2!

This order of moves is considered White's best. The game continued:

12...♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♔e7 14.♙g2 ♙b7 15.0–0 ♙g7 16.f4 0–0 17.♖d6 ♖ad8 18.♗hd1 ♗xd6 19.exd6

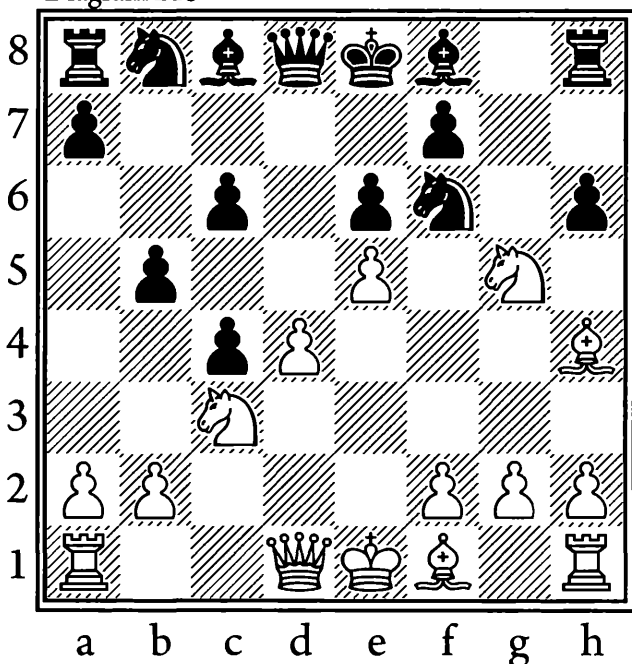
White has gained a distinct initiative for the sacrificed pawns. Instead of 12...♘xe5 Keres recommends 12...♙b7 13.♙g2 ♙b4 with complex play, but here too White holds a positional advantage in exchange for the material.

Now let us look at how events proceed if White accepts – not offers – a gambit. The following position arises after 9.♘xg5.

A. Denker – M. Botvinnik

USA – USSR radio match, 1945

Diagram 215



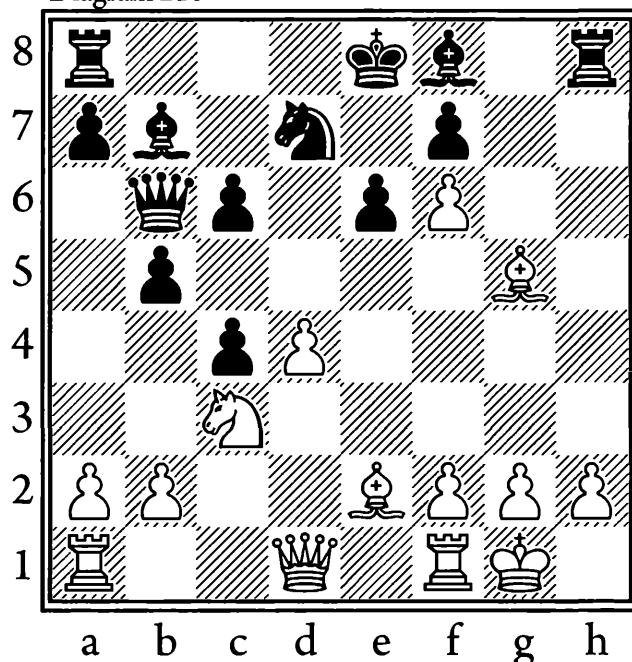
9...hxg5

At this point a complicated game results from the rarely played line 9...♘d5 10.♘xf7 ♔xh4 11.♘xh8 ♙b4 12.♖c1 ♔e4†! 13.♙e2 ♘f4, and if 14.f3 then 14...♔h7, winning the knight on h8. Sokolsky showed me this variation as long ago as 1948, and included it in his book *The Contemporary Chess Opening*; it deserves practical testing.

After 13...♘f4, Smyslov recommends 14.♔d2! as best for White. He gives the sample continuation 14...♘d3† 15.♙f1 ♘xc1 16.♘xe4 ♙xd2 17.♘xd2 a5!, “giving a position where it isn't easy to take stock of the mutual possibilities”.

10.♙xg5 ♘bd7 11.exf6 ♙b7 12.♙e2 ♔b6 13.0–0

Diagram 216



Botvinnik commented as follows:

“This position from my game with Denker has a look of sheer fantasy about it: Black's whole kingside has been destroyed, he has no pawn centre, he is a pawn down, and the location of his king arouses serious concern.

In actual fact, the black king will find a safe enough refuge for itself on the queenside, while White's centre pawn on d4 will be a convenient object of attack. By playing c6-c5 at an

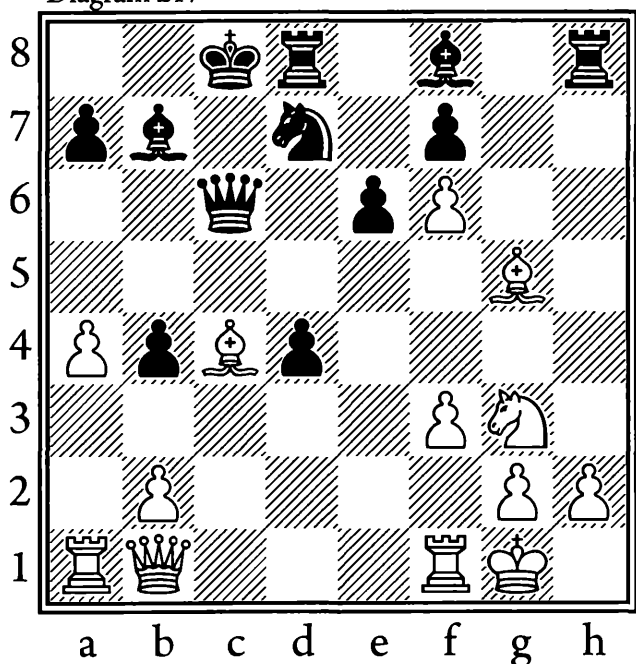
opportune moment Black will open diagonals for his bishops, after which the *white* king will prove to be insecure.

During the game, when this position arose, many masters thought that Black was in a very difficult situation, and yet five moves later it turned out that White's position was hopeless – even though, on the face of it, Denker had not made a single mistake.”

The game finished:

13...0–0–0 14.a4 b4 15.♘e4 c5 16.♙b1! ♙c7 17.♘g3 cxd4 18.♙xc4 ♙c6 19.f3

Diagram 217



19...d3!!

Bringing the dark-squared bishop into the battle.

20.♙c1 ♙c5† 21.♙h1 ♙d6 22.♙f4 ♙xh2†! 23.♙xh2 ♙h8† 24.♙h4 ♙xh4† 25.♙xh4 ♙f4! 0–1

A convincing rout!

Today, in order to give Black the maximum difficulty in working up a dangerous initiative in Botvinnik's gambit system, White usually fianchettoes his light-squared bishop.

V. Smyslov – M. Botvinnik

Moscow (5) 1954

1.c4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4 g5 9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♘bd7 11.exf6 ♙b7

The same position as in the game Denker – Botvinnik, this time reached by a different order of moves.

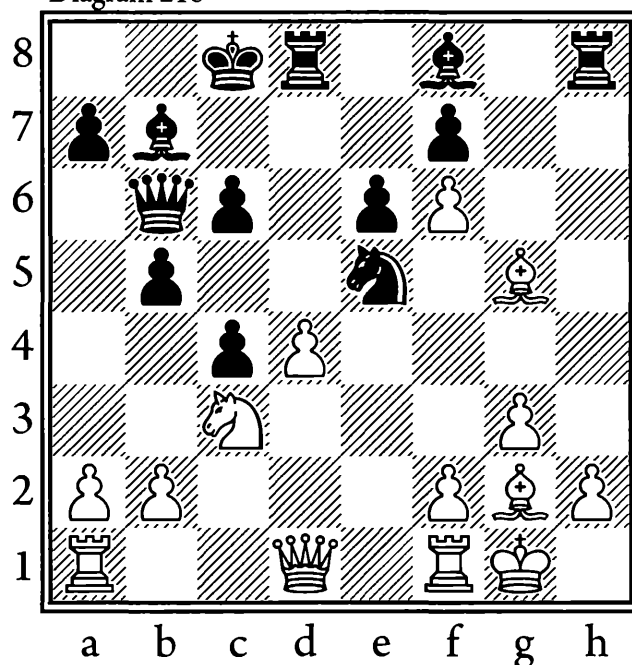
12.g3 ♙b6

Interestingly, Black cannot exploit the vulnerable position of White's rook by attacking it with 12...c5 – because of the reply 13.d5!. Then 13...b4 is unplayable in view of 14.dxe6, winning for White.

13.♙g2 0–0–0 14.0–0 ♘e5

The World Champion sets his opponent an intriguing problem.

Diagram 218



In his notes to the game with Denker, Botvinnik considered that in answer to 14...♘e5 the queen sacrifice 15.dxe5 would have been in White's favour. Now in a related position, he deliberately allows a similar sacrifice.

15. ♖e2 ♜xd4 16. ♙e3

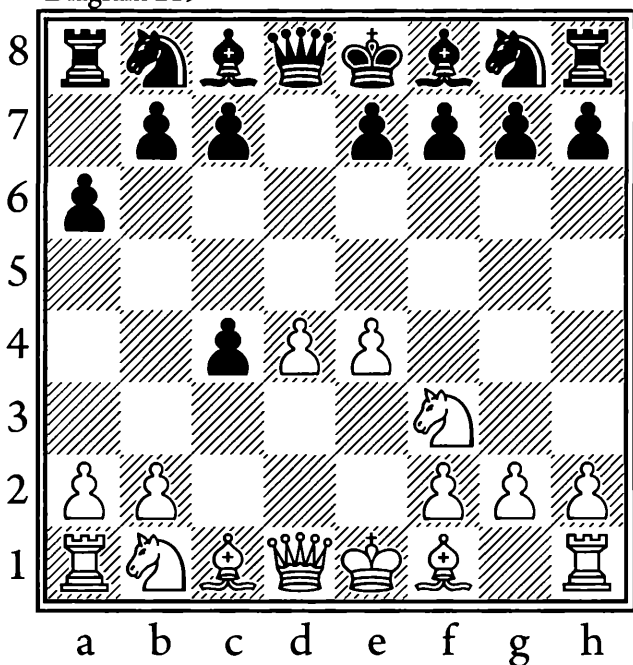
Smyslov has decided not to test the value of Botvinnik's innovation over-the-board.

16... ♜d3 17. ♜fd1 ♜xe2 18. ♜xd8† ♔xd8 19. ♘xe2

The game has passed into an ending, which concluded in a draw on the 41st move after a sharp struggle.

The following gambit arouses a great deal of interest. After 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3. ♘f3 a6, instead of 4.e3 which is traditional and regains the pawn, the Leningrad masters Borisenko and Furman suggested a more enterprising gambit move: 4.e4!

Diagram 219



Now 4...b5 can be met by 5.a4 ♙b7 6.axb5, and White deploys his forces very quickly. If for example 6...axb5, then 7. ♜xa8 ♙xa8 8. ♘c3 c6 9. ♙f4, and White's initiative is worth a pawn. If 6... ♙xe4, White similarly has an excellent game after 7. ♘c3.

G. Borisenko – S. Flohr

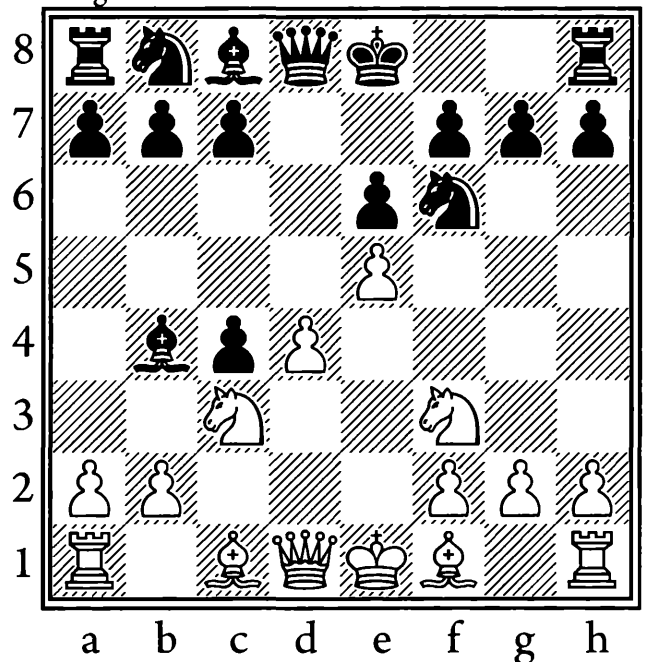
Moscow 1950

From the diagram position, Flohr decided not to hold on to the extra pawn. He continued

4... ♙g4 5. ♙xc4 e6 6. 0–0 ♘d7 7. ♘c3 c5 8.d5 e5, but after 9.a4 ♙d6 10. ♙e2 ♙xf3 11. ♙xf3 ♘e7 12. ♘b1! 0–0 13. ♘a3 White gained the advantage.

An interesting gambit can also be employed if Black replies 3... ♘f6, for instance: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3. ♘f3 ♘f6 4. ♘c3 e6 and now not 5.e3, but 5.e4. After 5... ♙b4 6.e5 (6. ♙g5 leads to the Vienna Variation), the following position arises.

Diagram 220



In comparison with the Alekhine games we examined before (pages 137-138) Black has a more pleasant position here, since he can later carry out the advance c7-c5 in one move, while White has not been given a tempo for a2-a4. Nonetheless White's initiative is very dangerous.

Lipnitsky – Lenchiner

Kiev 1953

(from diagram 220)

6... ♘e4

6... ♘d5 can be met by 7. ♙d2, and if 7... ♙xc3 then 8.bxc3.

7. ♜c2 ♜d5 8. ♙e2 ♙d7

A strong reply to 8...c5 is 9.0-0!

9.0-0 ♘xc3

Black could also take on c3 with his bishop, but after 10.bxc3 the situation of his knight on e4 would start to be a cause for concern. For example 10...♙c6 11.♘e1 h6 12.♙f3, with g2-g3 and ♘e1-g2-e3 coming.

10.bxc3 ♙e7

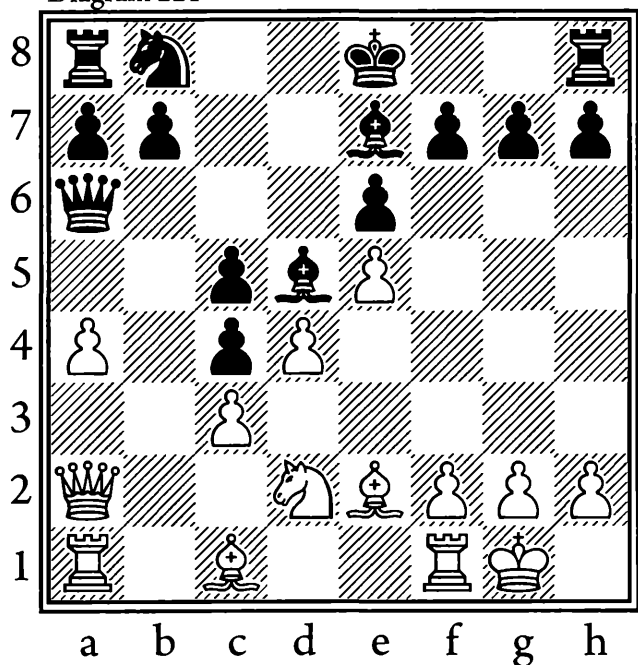
Black has kept his extra pawn and his dark-squared bishop, but after:

11.♘d2 ♙c6 12.♙f3 ♖b5 13.a4 ♖a6 14.♙e2!

The initiative is still with White. There followed:

14...♙d5 15.♖a2 c5

Diagram 221



16.♙a3!

White could simply have regained his pawn, but after 16.♙xc4 ♙xc4 17.♘xc4 cxd4 his initiative would be considerably diminished. To preserve it, he has recourse to a new pawn sacrifice.

16...♖xa4 17.♙xc4 ♙xc4 18.♘xc4 ♘d7

The obvious-looking capture 18...cxd4 would

be refuted by 19.♖e2!, ensuring that Black cannot castle.

19.dxc5 ♘xc5 20.♖e2 ♖c6 21.♘a5 ♖a6

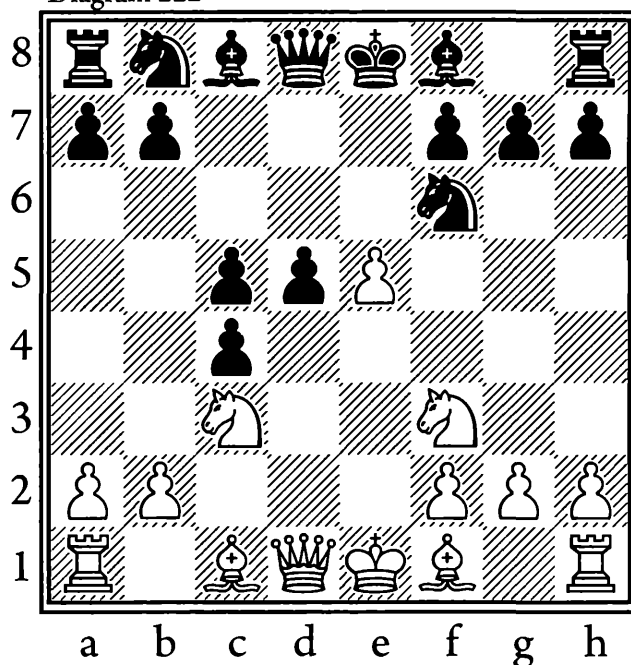
Possessing an extra pawn, Black forces a queen exchange, but White's initiative is not reduced by this.

22.♖xa6 bxa6 23.♘c6 ♖c8 24.♘xa7 ♖c7 25.♙xc5 ♙xc5 26.♘b5 ♖c6 27.♖xa6 ♖xa6 28.♘c7† ♔d7 29.♘xa6

And White has won a pawn. The knight's tour g1-f3-d2xc4-a5-c6xa7-b5-c7xa6 is noteworthy.

After 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3, Black may reply 4...c5 (instead of 4...e6). In this case too, however, White has quite a good game after 5.d5 e6 6.e4 exd5 7.e5!

Diagram 222



Possible variations are:

(a) 7...d4 8.exf6 dxc3 9.♖xd8† ♔xd8 10.♙g5! ♕e8 11.0-0-0! cxb2† 12.♕xb2 ♘c6 13.♙xc4, with a won position for White.

(b) 7...♘e4 8.♘xd5 ♙e6 9.♙xc4 and White has the advantage.

For the present it is hard to give a definitive

assessment of the gambit lines with 4.e4! or 5.e4!. What is clear, though, is that these sharp continuations significantly broaden White's scope in the Queen's Gambit Accepted, and that Black needs to take serious account of them.

Some gambits have proved to be so good that *fewer and fewer players are in favour of permitting them at all*. Among such gambits we may, for example, include the following.

M. Taimanov – H. Steiner

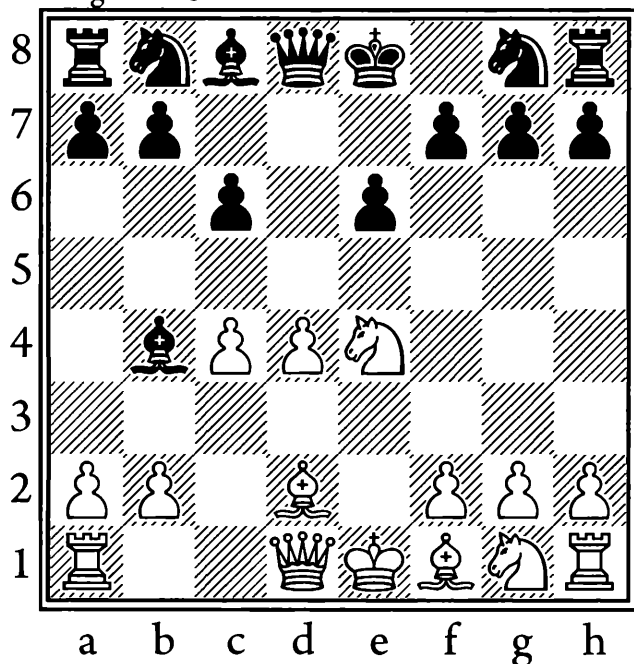
Stockholm 1952

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6 4.e4 dxe4
5.♗xe4 ♕b4†

In his game against Marshall at Cambridge Springs 1904, Chigorin continued instead with 5...♗f6 6.♗c3 ♗bd7 7.♗f3 ♕d6 8.♕d3 e5 9.0–0 0–0.

6.♕d2!

Diagram 223



6...♗xd4

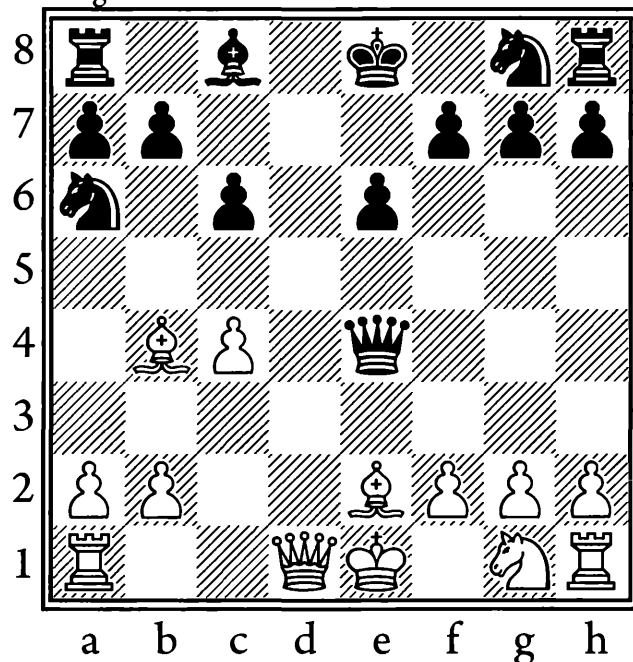
In Bronstein – Kotov, Moscow 1948, Kotov declined the gambit by playing 6...♕xd2† 7.♗xd2 ♗f6, but after 8.♗xf6† ♗xf6 9.♗f3

0–0 10.♕e2 ♗d7 11.♗e3! b6 12.0–0 c5 13.♗ad1 ♕b7 14. dxc5 ♗xc5 15.b4! ♗a6 16.a3 Black's game is not easy.

7.♕xb4 ♗xe4† 8.♕e2 ♗a6

This is the move that occurs most of the time. In Furman – Kopaev, Vilnius 1949, Black took the pawn with 8...♗xg2 and White developed his attack by 9.♗d6! ♗d7 10.0–0–0 ♗g5† 11.f4 ♗e7 12.♗d2 c5 13.♕c3 ♗gf6 14.♕f3 0–0 15.♗g2, with very strong pressure.

Diagram 224



9.♕d6!!

One of the most energetic ways of developing White's initiative. From here, the bishop operates with great force in all directions. Now a quick rout ensues after 9...♗xg2 10.♗d2! ♕d7 (or 10...♗xh1 11.0–0–0!, with threats of ♕f3 and ♕e7!) 11.0–0–0 0–0–0 12.c5! ♕e8 13.♕xa6 ♗xh1 14.♗a5!, and Black is lost (Rovner – Novotelnov, Odessa 1952).

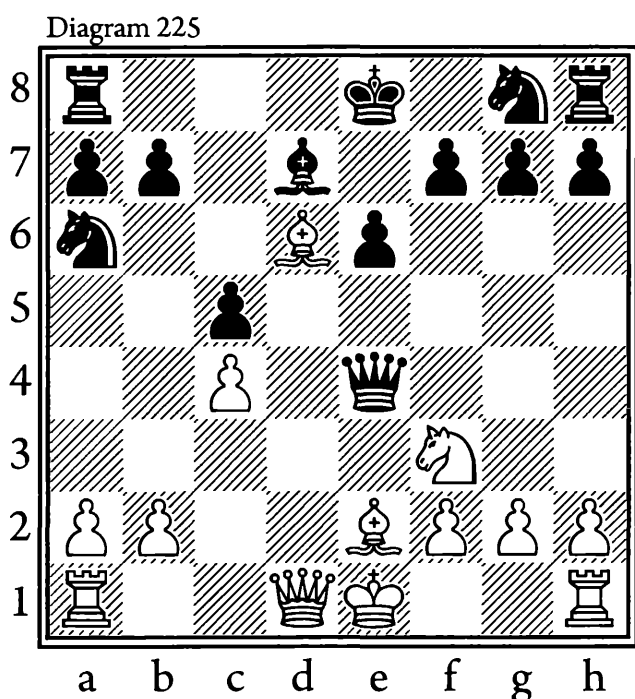
In the diagram position Black needs to defend with great care. For example 9...e5 10.♗f3 f6 would be met by 11.0–0, when Black is hopelessly behind in development. After centralizing his rooks White proceeds to the decisive attack, sacrificing a piece on e5 if necessary.

Nor is $9... \text{♞e7}$ $10. \text{♞f3}$ ♞f5 any better: $11. 0-0$ ♞xd6 $12. \text{♞xd6}$, and if $12... \text{♞xe2}$ then $13. \text{♞ad1}$. The explanation for Black's difficulties is that he cannot easily complete his development, especially since the position of his queen in the middle of the board allows White to gain further tempi.

The finish of Taimanov – Steiner is instructive:

$9... \text{♞d7}$ $10. \text{♞f3}$ c5

White's attack is also very dangerous after $10... 0-0-0$ $11. 0-0$, for instance $11... \text{♞e8}$ $12. \text{♞d3}!$ ♞g4 $13. \text{c5}$ etc.



$11. \text{♞e5}!$

Practically ending the game.

$11... \text{♞c6}$ $12. \text{♞xc6}$ bxc6

Or $12... \text{♞xc6}$ $13. \text{♞f3}$ ♞d7 $14. \text{♞e5}$, and Black is in a bad way.

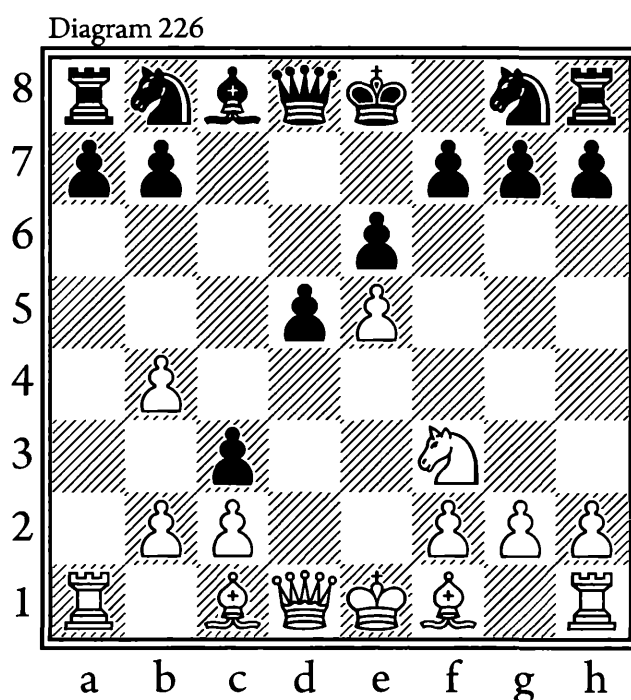
$13. 0-0$ ♞e7 $14. \text{♞a4}$ ♞b4 $15. \text{♞xc5}$ a5 $16. \text{♞f3}$

Black resigned six moves later.

Afterwards some ways of strengthening Black's defence were discovered in this line, but in principle I do not like the kind of variation in

which you have to think only about defending.

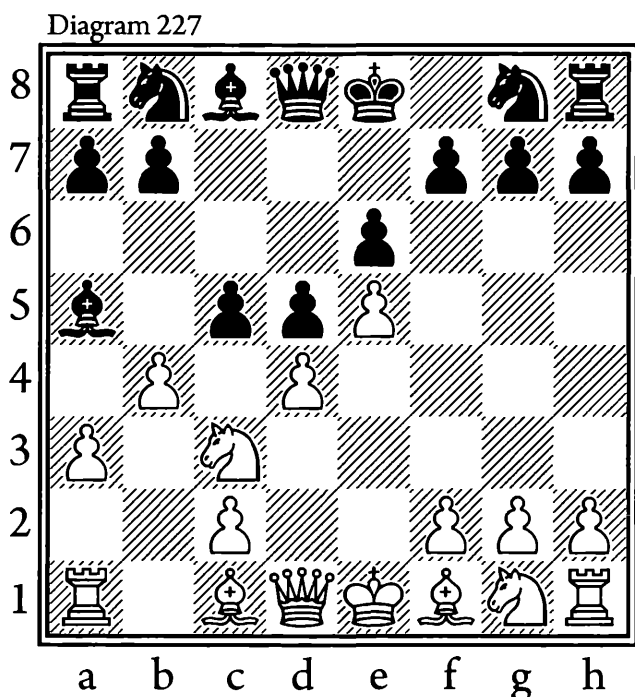
One more example: in the French Defence, after $1. \text{e4}$ e6 $2. \text{d4}$ d5 $3. \text{♞c3}$ ♞b4 $4. \text{e5}$ c5 $5. \text{a3}$, it was thought for a long time that a good line for Black was $5... \text{cxd4}$ $6. \text{axb4}$ dxc3 $7. \text{bxc3}$ $\text{♞c7}!$, as played for example in Lasker – Maroczy, New York 1924. This assessment was altered only after the game Rauzer – Alatortsev, Leningrad 1933, when in place of $7. \text{bxc3}$ White introduced a brilliant gambit idea – namely $7. \text{♞f3}!$



Now in the event of $7... \text{cxb2}$ $8. \text{♞xb2}$ Black has a “healthy” extra pawn with a very securely protected king. Today, nonetheless, this variation holds no attraction for players of the black side. True, White is not organizing any immediate attack on the black king, as he did in the last gambit we looked at. Yet his initiative, despite the slowness of the pace, is very dangerous for his opponent, in whose camp the dark squares are especially weak.

In this same line of the French ($1. \text{e4}$ e6 $2. \text{d4}$ d5 $3. \text{♞c3}$ ♞b4 $4. \text{e5}$ c5), Black sometimes answers $5. \text{a3}$ with $5... \text{♞a5}$. Botvinnik, for example, played this way three times in his 1954 match against Smyslov. Once again, a gambit

is the most enterprising and best way to fight for an opening advantage. White plays **6.b4!**



This idea was suggested by Alekhine as far back as 1924. After 6...cxb4 7.♘b5! bxa3† 8.c3 White firmly takes hold of the initiative. In the first place he is threatening 9.♘d6† and 9.♙xa3. The best testimony to the strength of this gambit is the fact that on all three occasions Botvinnik declined it by continuing 6...cxd4.

In conclusion I will bring two gambits of my own to the reader's attention.

I. Lipnitsky – I. Kan

Moscow 1952

In the Paulsen Variation of the Sicilian, which Kan has very frequently employed, an interesting position arises after the following seven moves:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♔c7 6.♙e2 ♙b4 7.0–0 ♘f6

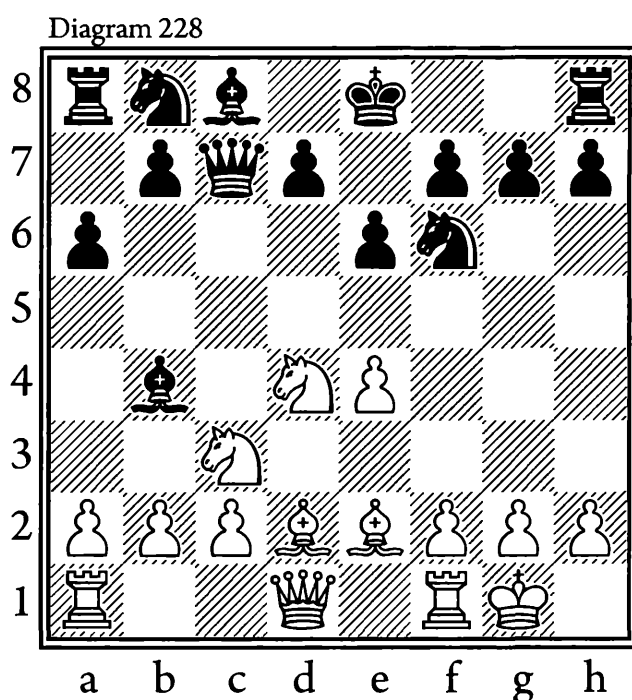
Black could win a pawn by 7...♙xc3 8.bxc3 ♔xc3, but after 9.♖b1 White's lead in devel-

opment and the possibility of a quick attack would more than make up for the sacrifice.

Black has no objection to winning a pawn – but on e4, not c3. He is now threatening 8...♙xc3 and 9...♘xe4. What is White to play? The move f2-f3 would not be in the spirit of the position. Nor is 8.♙f3 attractive, blocking the advance of the f-pawn.

It seems to me that White's fight for the initiative has to involve a gambit:

8.♙d2!



The point of the sacrifice is to answer 8...♙xc3 9.♙xc3 ♘xe4 with 10.♙b4. There is no disputing that White has the initiative. Some masters, Aronin for example, have expressed doubt as to whether this is worth a pawn. To me it seems it *is* worth it. Thus for example on 10...♘c5, there could follow 11.♘b3! d6 12.♘xc5 dxc5 13.♙c3 0–0 14.♙d3 and White's initiative is powerful. It would be interesting to test this gambit in practice.

In the game, Kan decided not to undertake such a task, and the fight continued as follows:

8...♙e7

White was threatening 9.♖cb5!.

9.f4 d6 10.♔e1 ♖c6

By playing ♔c7-b6 on move 9 or 10 Black could have won the pawn on b2, but this would only have helped White to increase his initiative.

As the game went, White obtained an irresistible attack anyway:

11.♖xc6 bxc6 12.♔g3 0–0 13.e5 dxe5 14.fxe5 ♖d7 15.♙f4 ♗h8

Or 15...♙c5† 16.♗h1 ♙d4 17.♙ad1 ♙xe5 18.♙xd7!, and White wins.

16.♖e4 a5 17.♙ad1 ♔b6† 18.♗h1 ♔xb2 19.♙d3 ♙b8 20.♖f6! etc.

I. Lipnitsky – L. Aronin

Moscow 1950

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 a6 6.♙c4 e6

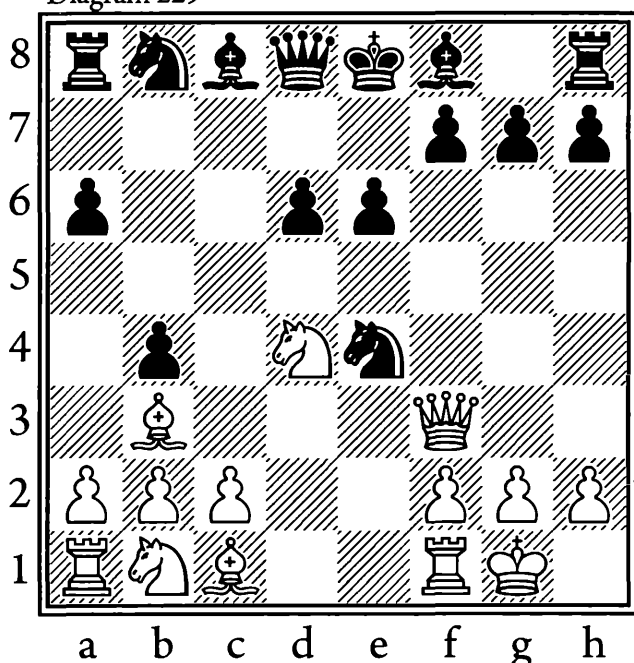
A popular line of the Sicilian Defence. Now the most active continuation appears to be:

7.0–0 b5 8.♙b3!

With this last move White is offering a gambit. Aronin accepted the challenge. There followed:

8...b4 9.♖b1! ♖xe4 10.♔f3

Diagram 229



White has given up an important central pawn, but in return he has gained a lead in development and opened lines for the attack. The retreat of his knight on move 9 to its starting position is noteworthy. The outwardly more active 9.♖a4 would have been weaker, since the a4-square should be reserved for White's bishop. Moreover from b1 the knight can be brought into the action more easily.

Now Black has two replies at his disposal: 10...d5 and 10...♙b7. Aronin opted for **10...d5**, and the game continued:

11.c4 bxc3

Black captures *en passant* in order to reduce the speed and strength of White's offensive.

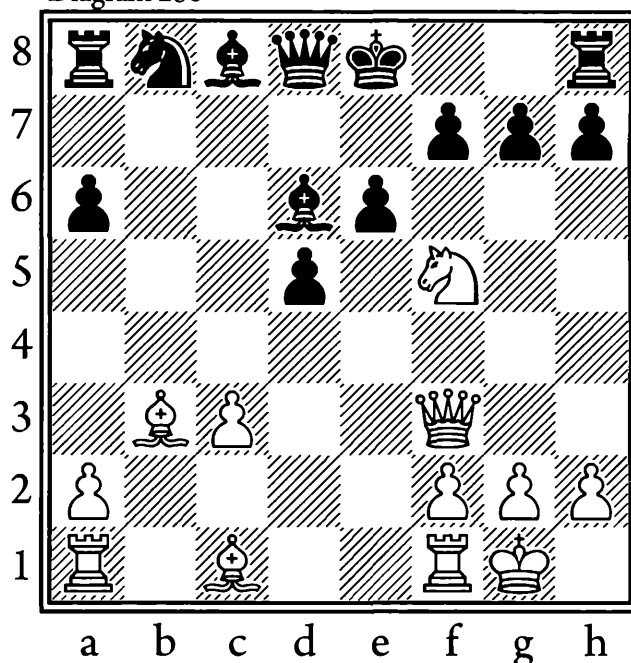
12.♖xc3 ♖xc3 13.bxc3 ♙d6

To stop White from playing 14.c4 (in view of 14...♔h4) or 14.♔g3.

14.♖f5!

Without this move it would not be easy for White to develop his initiative.

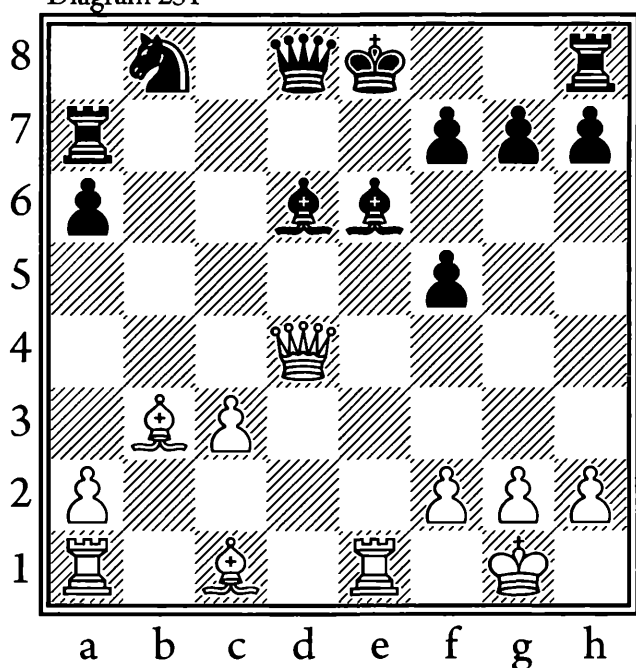
Diagram 230



Aronin declined the sacrifice on f5 by playing **14...0–0!**, but after **15.♖xd6 ♔xd6 16.♙f4** the initiative is firmly in White's hands.

If Black accepts the sacrifice with 14...exf5, there follows 15.♖xd5 ♖a7 (or 15...♙xh2† 16.♙xh2 ♖xd5 17.♙xd5 ♖a7 18.♞e1†, with advantage to White) 16.♞e1† ♙e6 (not 16...♙f8? 17.♙a3! and White wins) 17.♖d4.

Diagram 231



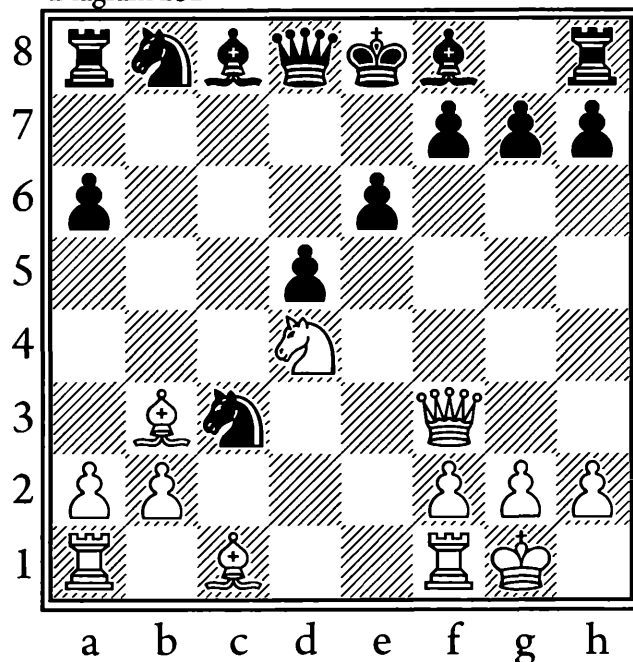
And now:

(a) A problem-like mating position arises after 17...♞e7 18.♖xg7 ♞f8 19.♙h6 ♘d7 20.♙a4!, and against any reply White plays ♖xf8 mate. Black could move his rook away from e7 instead of playing 19...♘d7, but this would not save him either, e.g. 19...♞b7 20.♙xe6 fxe6 21.♞xe6† ♙e7 22.♖xf8† etc. Black's best answer to 18.♖xg7 would be 18...♙d7, but even so he could not avoid coming under a strong attack.

(b) 17...♙xh2† 18.♙xh2 ♖xd4 19.cxd4 0-0 20.♙a3 and White's initiative is very dangerous, for example 20...♞c8 21.♞xe6, or 20...♞d8 21.d5 ♙c8 (21...♙d7 22.♞e7) 22.♙e7 ♞dd7 23.♙d6 and wins.

This same gambit was subsequently played in the following two games (*moves 1-12 as in Lipnitsky – Aronin*).

Diagram 232

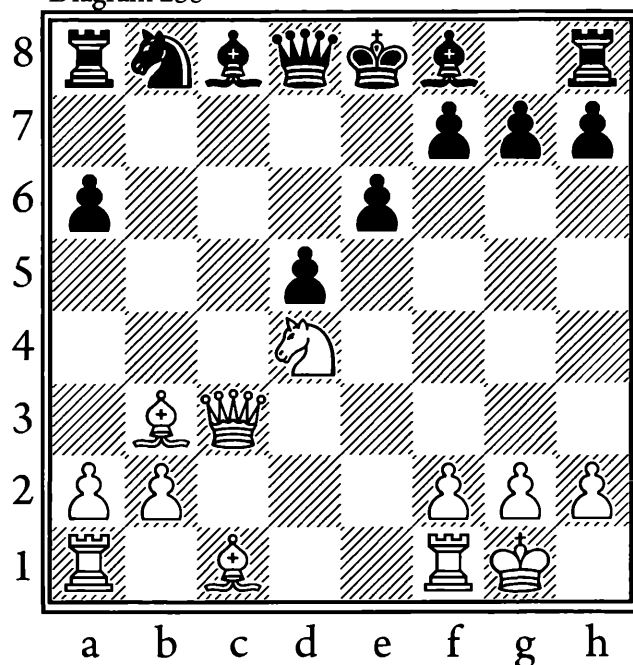


Khasin – Krogus (Leningrad 1954): 13.bxc3 ♙c5 14.♖g3 0-0 15.♙h6 ♙xd4 16.cxd4 ♖f6 17.♙f4 ♘c6 18.♞fd1 ♙d7 19.♙c2 g6 20.♙g5 ♖h8 21.♖f4 f6 22.♙h6 ♞f7 23.♖d6 f5 24.♙a4 ♘xd4 25.♙xd7, and White won.

Khenkin – Yudovich (Moscow 1954): 13.♖xc3 ♙e7 14.♘f5! exf5 15.♖xg7 ♙f6 16.♙a4† ♙e7 17.♞e1† ♙e6 18.♙g5 ♙xg5 19.♖xg5† ♙d6 20.♖f4† ♙e7 21.♖h4† f6 22.♖b4† ♙f7 23.♞xe6! ♙xe6 24.♞e1† ♙f7 25.♖b7†, and White won on the 37th move.

The strong move ♘d4-f5! would also enable White to develop his initiative against other replies to 13.♖xc3.

Diagram 233



For example:

(a) 13...♙b7 14.♘f5! exf5 15.♙a4† ♘d7 16.♖e1† ♙e7 17.♙xg7 ♖f8 18.♙h6

(b) 13...♙d7 14.♖e1 ♙e7 15.♘f5! exf5 16.♙xg7 ♖f8 17.♙xd5 etc.

(c) 13...♙d6 14.♘f5! exf5 15.♙xg7 ♖f8 16.♙a4† ♙d7 17.♖e1† ♙e7 18.♙h6 etc.

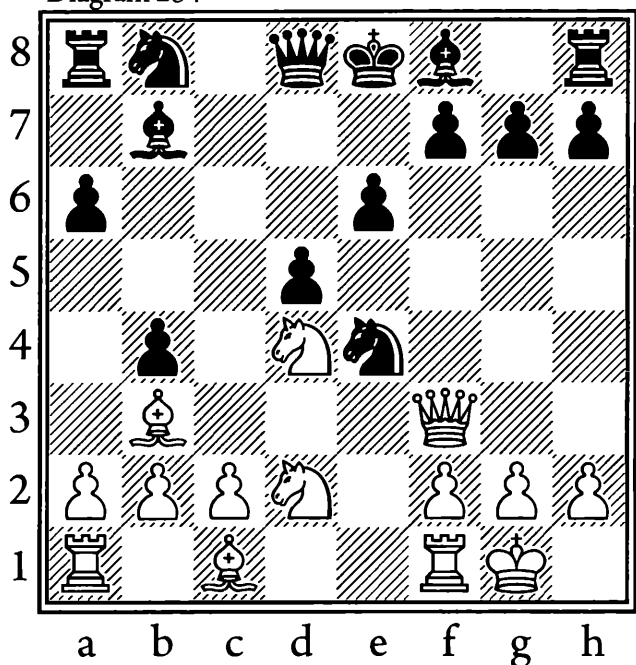
In a number of theoretical annotations to the position after:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♙c4 e6 7.0-0 b5 8.♙b3 b4 9.♘b1 ♘xe4 10.♙f3

The move **10...♙b7** (instead of 10...d5) has been recommended as Black's best. Yet here again White has enough initiative for the pawn. He can play for instance **11.♘d2**. Then 11...♘xd2 12.♙xb7 ♘xb3 is not good for Black in view of the simple 13.axb3, for after 13...♘d7 White recovers his pawn while keeping the initiative.

The reply 11...d5 is also inadequate.

Diagram 234



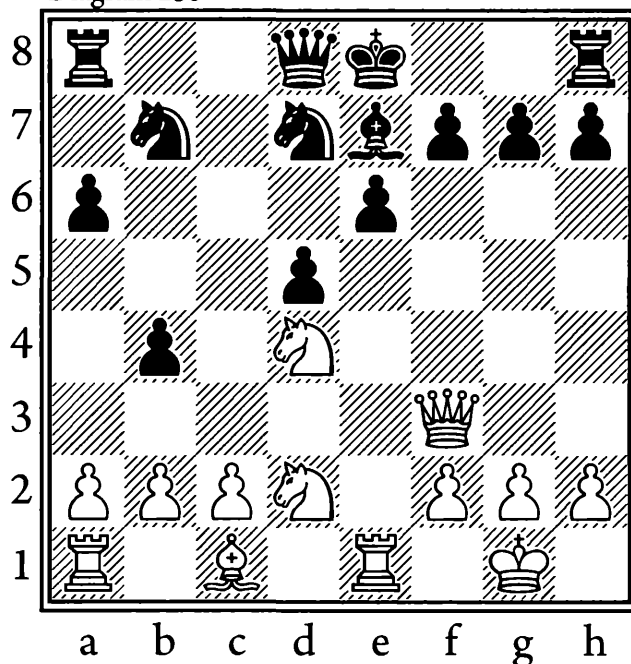
White has an attractive win with 12.♙a4† ♘d7 13.♘xe6! fxe6 14.♘xe4 dxe4 15.♙h5† ♙e7 (or 15...g6 16.♙e5! ♖g8 17.♙xe6† and 18.♙xg8) 16.♖d1! ♙d5 17.♖xd5! exd5

18.♙xd5, and Black's extra rook fails to rescue him from defeat. For example, 18...♘f6 19.♙e5† ♙f7 20.♙b3†; or 18...♙c8 19.♙g5† ♘f6 20.♖e1; or finally, 18...h6 19.♙xe4† ♙f6 20.♙c6† ♙e5 (20...♙e7 21.♙g5†! hxg5 22.♖e1†) 21.♙d2 and White wins.

After 11.♘d2 Black's best defence is **11...♘c5**, but then comes **12.♙a4†** (this is why White needed to have the a4-square available) **12...♘bd7 13.♙c6**, and White holds the initiative as before. There can follow, for example:

13...d5 14.♖e1 ♙e7 15.♙xb7 ♘xb7

Diagram 235



Now White can win back his pawn and retain the initiative by playing 16.♘c6 ♙c7 17.♘xe7 ♙xe7 18.♙xd5.

However, in the diagram position the rook sacrifice **16.♖xe6!?** is extremely interesting. After **16...fxe6 17.♘xe6 ♙b6**, White has two ways of pursuing the attack:

(a) 18.♘xg7† ♙d8 19.♙xd5 ♙b5 (19...♙c8 is worse: 20.♘e4! ♙b5 21.♘f5! ♙f8 22.♘ed6† ♙xd6 23.♘xd6† ♘xd6 24.♙xa8† ♘b8 25.♙f4 ♙b7 26.♙xb7† ♘xb7, and White is the only one with winning chances in the endgame) 20.♙e4 White has three pawns for the rook,

and moreover it is not so simple for Black to hide his king away without at the same time suffering material losses.

(b) 18. ♖xd5! White retains the threat of ♗xg7†, and it has long been known that the threat is often stronger than the execution. Black cannot play 18... ♗b5 because of 19. ♗c7†, or 18... ♗d6 because of 19. ♖xb7. White is threatening 19. ♗c4!. The best defence probably lies in 18... ♗f6, after which White can pick up a third pawn with 19. ♗xg7† and retain a variety of possibilities.

The variations I have given are only samples and do not exhaust the content of this gambit, but it seems to me that in other cases too, White's initiative is worth the pawn.

* * *

The examples we have looked at permit us to draw some general conclusions. In the modern handling of gambits – which have now become a feature of closed and half-closed as well as open games – the following factors are characteristic: –

(1) The basic aim of the pawn sacrifice is to seize the initiative – the overall control of events – and to improve the placing of your pieces.

(2) Increasing the initiative is made possible by the presence of specific positional advantages (more space, better development, etc.).

(3) Quite often the struggle will assume the character of a manoeuvring game, which significantly enhances the possibilities of both attack and defence. There are not necessarily, or characteristically, any sharp forced variations or combinative threats.

(4) Striving to assail the king at all costs and as fast as possible, which was the essence of gambit play in the past, is not obligatory. An attack on the king is no longer the direct aim;

it comes as the logical culmination of a systematic development of the initiative. All the same, in the practice of modern contests you *will* quite often see cases of a gambit played in the “good old” style.

(5) The gambit approach is often the most energetic and sometimes the only way of fighting for an opening advantage.

But isn't it risky to play modern gambits? After all, the player offering the gambit may see his initiative peter out while his opponent remains a pawn up. There is no denying that there *is* a distinct element of risk. However, in this connection I would like to quote some words by David Bronstein, one of the finest connoisseurs of the openings in general and gambits in particular:

“What characterizes the opening play of the leading Soviet chessplayers, above all Botvinnik and Smyslov, is that they do not strive for a game with no danger of loss, but look for complex positions with double-edged action. *Given the present-day level of technique, it is impossible to beat a strong opponent if you do not allow him any counter-chances.* That said, everyone of course tries to ensure that his chances are superior to his opponent's, and – most importantly – that the position suits his own tastes and the peculiarities of his style.”

What constitutes the difficulty and attractiveness of modern gambits is that they offer wide scope for individual creativity, since in these openings you cannot follow any well-worn paths. For those with too much of a penchant for theoretical lines, the application of gambit ideas will prove extremely useful as a fine method of education and training in independent chess thought.

Chapter 13

Opening and Middlegame

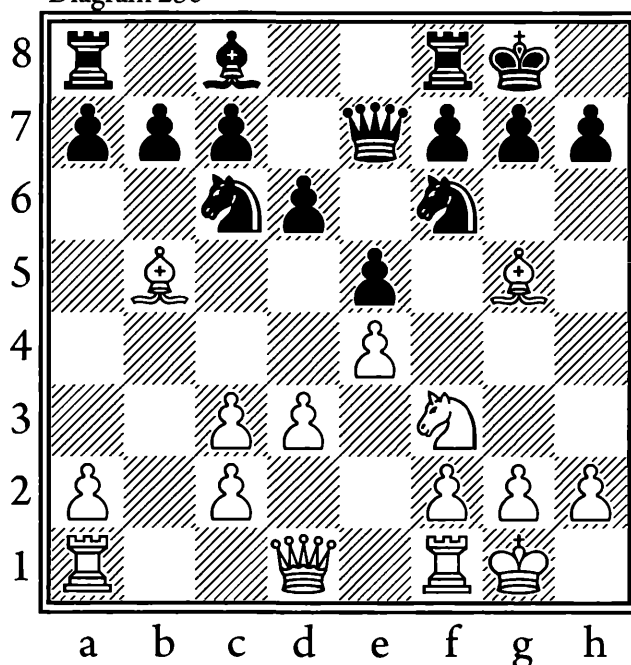
How long does the opening last? When does the opening give way to the middlegame, how are these two phases of the game to be distinguished? These questions are often rather difficult to answer. It is interesting that different authors give different definitions of the boundaries of the opening. Lisitsyn says it lasts 10-20 moves, Levenfish says 13-15 moves, Sokolsky says 10-15.

In my view, this disagreement in *defining the boundary* results from a lack of consensus as to what *state of affairs* should be thought of as the end of the opening. Thus for example Lisitsyn, in his book *The Strategy and Tactics of Chess Art*, defines the opening as “the struggle in positions that have not yet settled down, that is when the position of the pieces and pawns has yet to assume bold, concrete outlines”. This definition is in itself rather woolly, so it is not surprising that Lisitsyn extends the boundary of the opening as far as move 20. Everywhere we see the boundary being pushed further forward by the authors of numerous reviews and theoretical articles. Are they right? It seems to me that they are not.

The opening should be regarded as the phase of *initial* mobilization of the forces. When most of the pieces have been brought into action and the placing of the kings has been decided, we can regard the opening as completed.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♕b5
♕b4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 ♕xc3 7.bxc3 d6
8.♗g5 ♔e7

Diagram 236



In the diagram position, arising from the Four Knights Game, we may say that the opening is over for both sides after just eight moves. As from now, the concrete plans pursued by the players will no longer involve the initial development of the pieces from their starting positions.

9.♖e1

In my view this move is no longer a continuation of the opening development, since it is not yet clear where the rook is best placed – f1

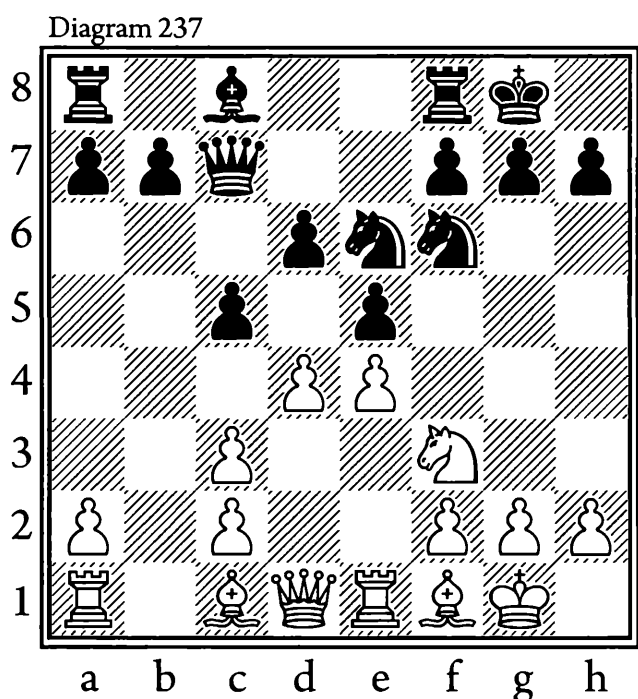
or e1. If White were trying to carry out a plan involving f2-f4, the rook on f1 would already be developed.

9...♖d8 10.d4 ♖e6

If some readers may have had some doubts about the position after eight moves, everyone will now probably agree that the middlegame stage has been reached.

11.♙c1 c5 12.♙f1 ♔c7

Both white bishops have retreated to their starting squares. What is this? A return to the opening?



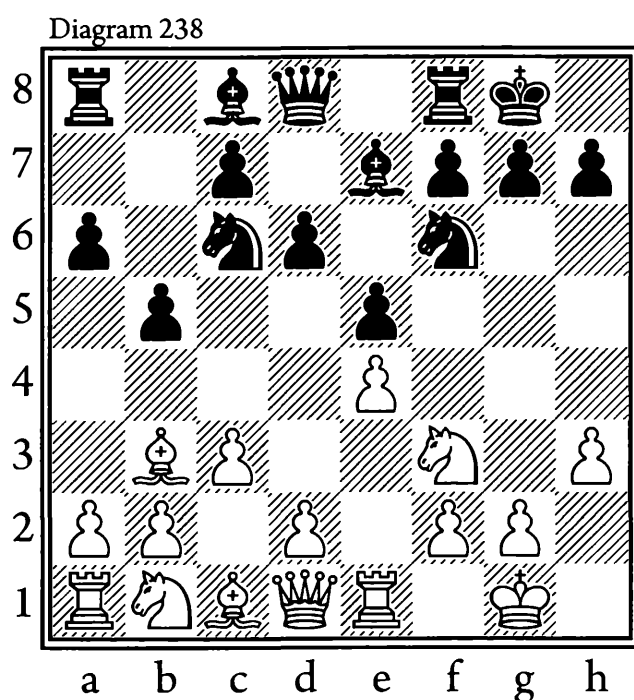
Of course not. The point is that in the war of manoeuvre that has unfolded, both sides are carrying out a specific, planned regrouping. White fortified the e-pawn with his rook so as to have the possibility of going into action in the centre with d3-d4. Withdrawing his bishop to c1, he covers the f4-square against intrusion by the black knight, while if the game should open up in the centre, this bishop will find good employment on b2. Yet despite the fact that the play has already entered the middle-game stage, there are people everywhere who class this as an opening position.

Let's turn to the Chigorin Defence in the Ruy

Lopez, where the general opinion is that the opening stage lasts a very long time.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3 0-0
9.h3

Black has finished developing his pieces and castled. For him, the position on the board stands on the dividing line between opening and middlegame.

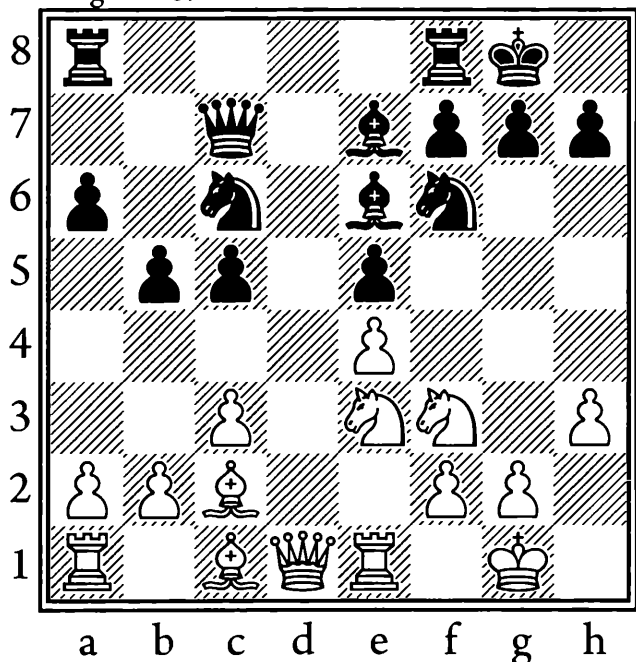


He is now faced with choosing his subsequent game plan. Should he opt for a queenside advance with 9...♖a5 10.♙c2 c5, combining it with a diversion in the centre (d6-d5) if appropriate? Should he go in for a regrouping such as 9...♖d7 and 10...♙f6, etc.? Or should he initiate play in the centre with an immediate 9...♙e6? I repeat that Black will be setting out on any of these plans in a position where the opening (or initial mobilization of forces) is already over for him.

For White, matters are different. His entire queenside is still frozen solid; for him, the opening is not yet finished. Let's make a few more moves:

9...♖a5 10.♙c2 c5 11.d4 ♔c7 12.♘bd2
♘c6 13.dxc5 dxc5 14.♘f1 ♙e6 15.♘e3

Diagram 239



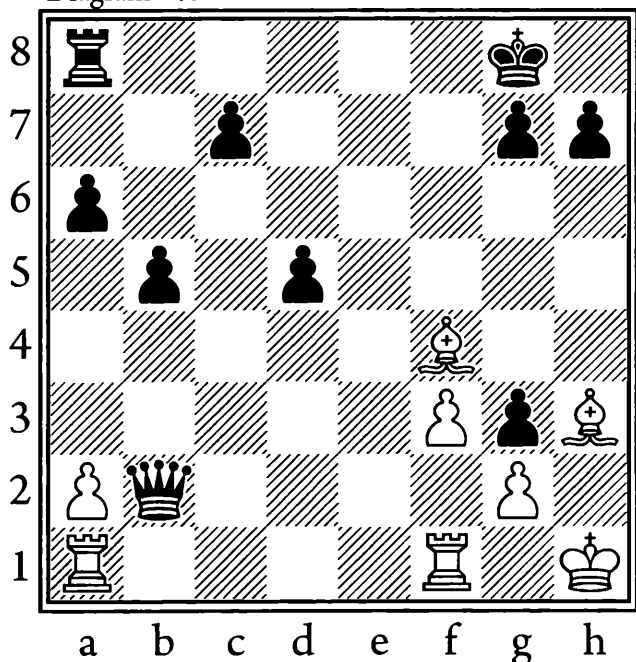
It is now obvious that the opening is over for White too – all his forces have been brought into the action (for the moment the rook on a1 and the bishop on c1 are best placed where they are). Yet in chess literature, oddly enough, this is considered to be an opening position. Let's go further still:

15...♖ad8 16.♔e2 g6 17.a4 c4 18.♘g5

Well then – at last we have reached what many people will think is a middlegame position good and proper. And of course they are right. Nevertheless, all the way to **17...♙c8 19.axb5 axb5 20.b3 h6 21.♘f3**, if not further, this is still for some reason said to be an opening variation. Here no doubt is where Lisitsyn takes his idea that the opening lasts for twenty moves.

Here are some more examples.

Diagram 240

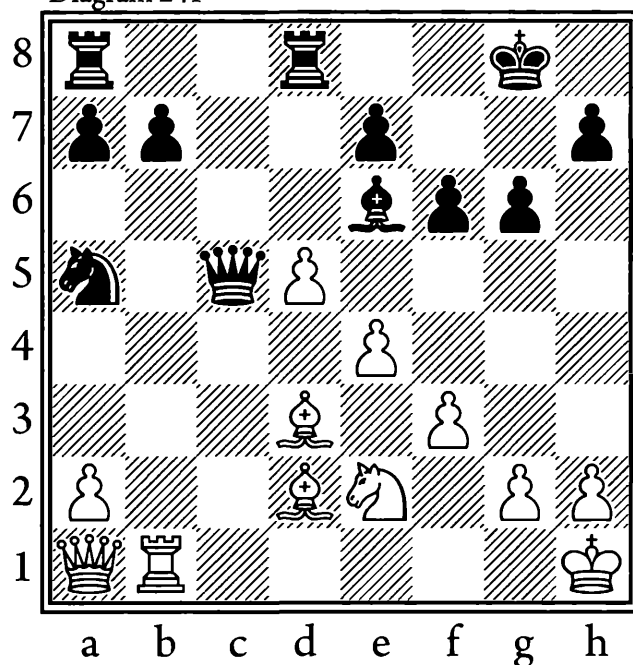


In the diagram position, both sides have long since forgotten about their opening development. There seems to have been a fair amount of bloodshed in the middlegame struggle. The endgame too is still far off. Yet many authors apply a different criterion to the position. Just because it arose from a forced line (in Smyslov – Reshevsky, Radio match USSR – USA 1945), they speak of an “opening variation”:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0–0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.c3 ♙c5 10.♘bd2 0–0 11.♙c2 f5 12.♘b3 ♙b6 13.♘fd4 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 ♙xd4 15.cxd4 f4 16.f3 ♘g3 17.hxg3 fxg3 18.♔d3 ♙f5 19.♔xf5! ♙xf5 20.♙xf5 ♔h4 21.♙h3 ♔xd4† 22.♔h1 ♔xe5 23.♙d2 ♔xb2 24.♙f4

In a situation from Bronstein – Boleslavsky (Moscow 1950), the middlegame, according to all our notions, is in full swing:

Diagram 241

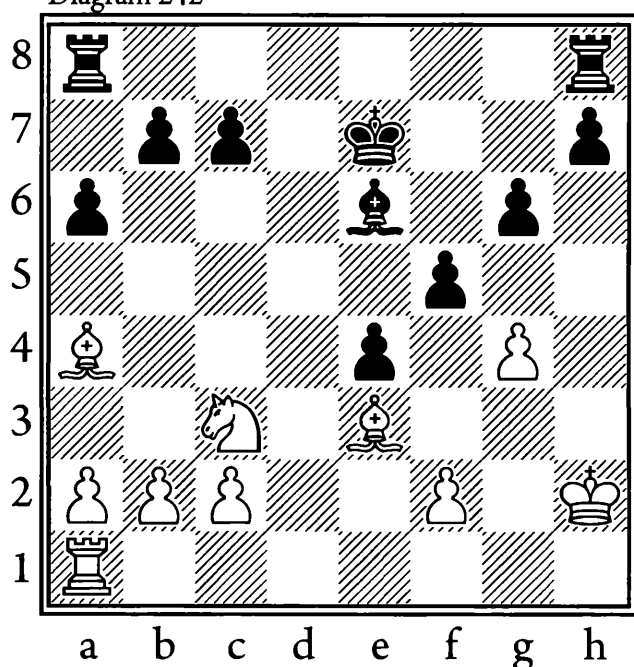


Yet this position too, arising from the moves **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5 7.♙c4 ♙g7 8.♘e2 0–0 9.0–0 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♘c6 11.♙e3 ♙g4 12.f3 ♘a5 13.♙d3 ♙e6 14.d5 ♙xa1 15.♔xa1 f6 16.♙h6 ♔b6† 17.♔h1 ♙fd8 18.♙b1 ♔c5 19.♙d2**, is one that many people place in the opening category.

We could give countless examples of such “opening” variations. Let’s take just one more, in which the “opening variation” culminates in an ending:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0–0 ♘xe4 6.d4 exd4 7.♖e1 d5 8.♘xd4
♙d6 9.♘xc6 ♙xh2† 10.♔h1 ♚h4
11.♖xe4† dxe4 12.♚d8† ♚xd8 13.♘xd8†
♔xd8 14.♔xh2 ♙e6 15.♙e3 f5 16.♘c3
♔e7 17.g4 g6 (Capablanca – Ed. Lasker,
New York 1915)

Diagram 242



The question arises as to *why* people ascribe a whole range of lines to the opening category when the opening in these lines is long since over and the middlegame has been unfolding for several moves. It would be naive to suppose that a line is called an opening variation right up to move 25 just because it has been repeated several times.

Given such views on how long the opening lasts, and considering how fast the study of variations is progressing, there are cases where we could risk losing the middlegame altogether, jumping straight from the opening to the endgame.

In chess literature it has become a traditional assumption that the middlegame can only be

studied in terms of the general elements of chess strategy and tactics, whereas the opening is additionally studied in terms of variations. In earlier periods in the evolution of chess theory, that assumption may have reflected the true state of affairs, but today it no longer corresponds to reality and is probably the main reason for the widespread fallacy which exaggerates the duration of the opening stage of the game.

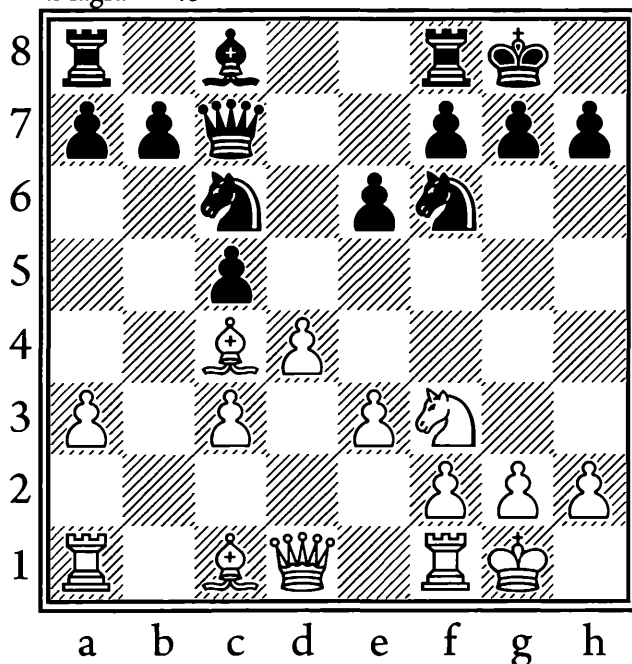
It is perfectly obvious that the opening, understood as the initial stage of the game, cannot be narrowed or expanded according to how much analysis has been devoted to this or that continuation, or how many identical moves have been repeated by various players. To think that it can is to contradict elementary chess logic. The truth of the matter is as follows.

In the present stage of chess evolution, *a certain part of the middlegame is subject to exactly the same kind of analytical study as the opening*. In the relevant cases the point of departure for the investigations is not the starting position of the game, but a position after about 8-15 moves, when the opening is basically over. Such a position will come in for refined and wide-ranging study.

It is for this very reason that we often witness a scenario in which two players reel off their opening moves at top speed, as if keen to “skip through” the opening stage and reach a particular position that suits both of them. The real struggle between them begins from that position, rather in the way that the masters of *shatranj* would start the game from ready-made *tabiyat*.

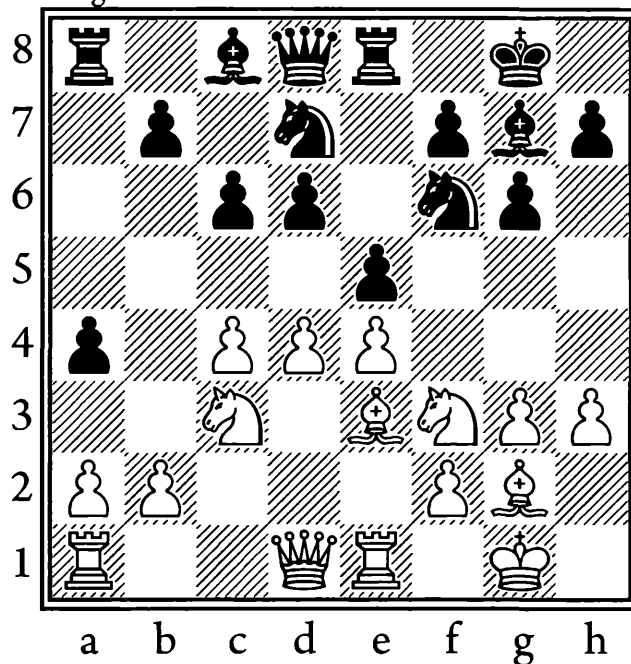
Here are a few popular *tabiyat* from modern play.

Diagram 243



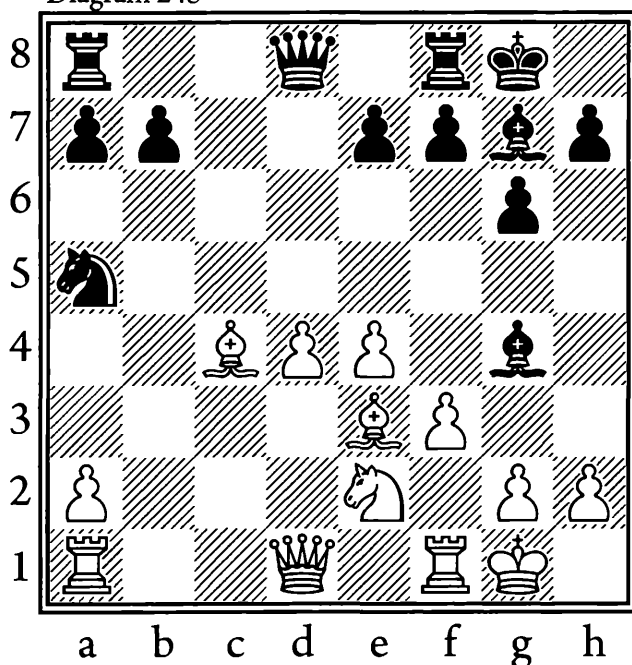
Position after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♖b4 4.e3 d5 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♙d3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♚c7.

Diagram 244



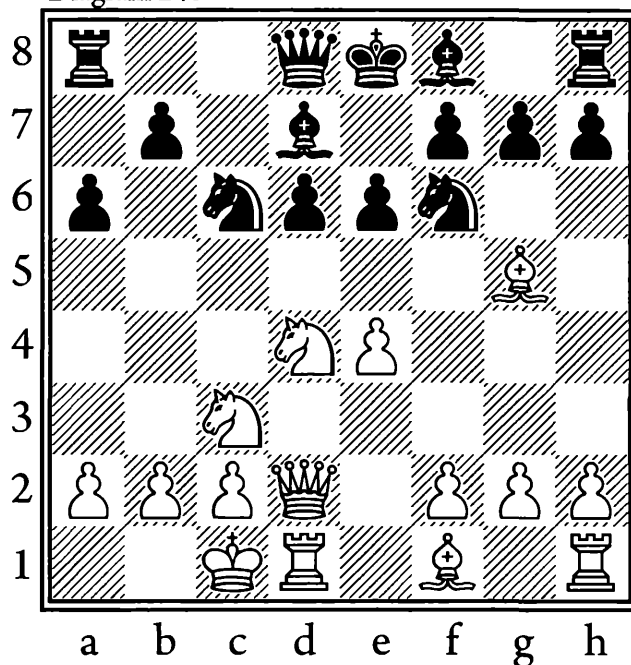
Position after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.♘f3 0-0 5.g3 d6 6.♙g2 ♘bd7 7.0-0 e5 8.e4 c6 9.h3 a5 10.♙e1 ♙e8 11.♙e3 a4.

Diagram 245



Position after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5 7.♙c4 ♙g7 8.♘e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♘c6 10.♙e3 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♙g4 12.f3 ♘a5.

Diagram 246



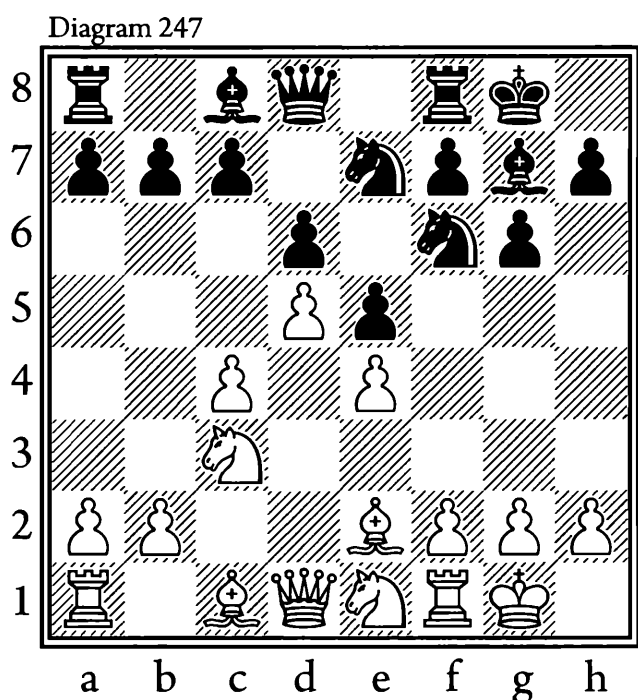
Position after 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♙d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♙d7.

For convenience we could agree to label these positions “transitional”, standing as they do on the borderline between opening and middlegame. Most of them did not come about fortuitously – they crystallized, so to speak, as the result of many years of battling in this or that opening variation.

Obviously an analytical investigation into such critical “transitional” positions opens up new possibilities for a penetrating study of the middlegame, since it permits a more subtle and accurate evaluation of a range of ideas.

Let's turn to a transitional position from the King's Indian Defence. This critical position, enjoying wide popularity, arises after:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♔g7 4.e4 d6
5.♘f3 0-0 6.♔e2 ♘c6 7.0-0 e5 8.d5 ♘e7
9.♘e1



The plans for both sides are common knowledge. White attacks on the queenside, preparing to break through with c4-c5. Black attacks on the kingside, intending f7-f5-f4 and g6-g5. We know that when the players are attacking on opposite wings, success depends on your ability to combine your own offensive with skilful counter-action against that of your opponent. Every tempo acquires special significance. It is therefore essential for both sides to ascertain the most appropriate measures in the most concrete possible terms.

For example, a question arising for Black is where to withdraw his knight from f6 in preparation for f7-f5. Should it go to d7 or e8? In the former case Black is making it harder for White to carry out his break with c4-c5, but then again the knight is confining Black's own bishop on c8. With the knight on e8, the light-squared bishop's diagonal stays open, besides which the knight is defending the points

d6 and c7 which can expect to be assailed by White's pieces later; but then White's c4-c5 is easier to accomplish.

Analogous questions also arise for White. Should he play b2-b4 or not? Should he bring his bishop out to e3 or refrain from this and play for example ♔c1-d2, so as not to give Black a tempo when he plays f5-f4?

Such questions are extremely difficult to answer, however highly developed your positional flair may be. Only a great deal of practical testing can indicate the worth of some particular plans, ideas, moves.

Yet some chessplayers have no wish to wait for the results of these tests, rightly figuring that when the fine points of the position become widely known, it will be hard to win with the variation in question. Instead of this, they subject the critical "transitional" position to a detailed examination in their own home "laboratory", so as to be the first to unearth its secrets.

As a result of a thorough analysis of variations, they succeed in penetrating deeply into the very essence of the position and uncovering its strategic and tactical refinements – in other words plans, ideas, combinations. Analytical work of this kind is purely creative in character, for it stems from the wish to discover independently – to understand and to experience – what no one so far has known about. That said, when a player has made a deep study of certain positions, schemes and systems, and then encounters them in practice, his opponent is in for a very hard time.

We often hear that Botvinnik plays the French Defence with virtuosity, in the way that Bronstein and Geller play the King's Indian, Taimanov and Kotov the Sicilian – and Keres, Smyslov and Boleslavsky the Ruy Lopez. Yet we do not always imagine just how much creative work they had to do before this was possible.

We will study some examples of players handling their favourite systems with virtuosity.

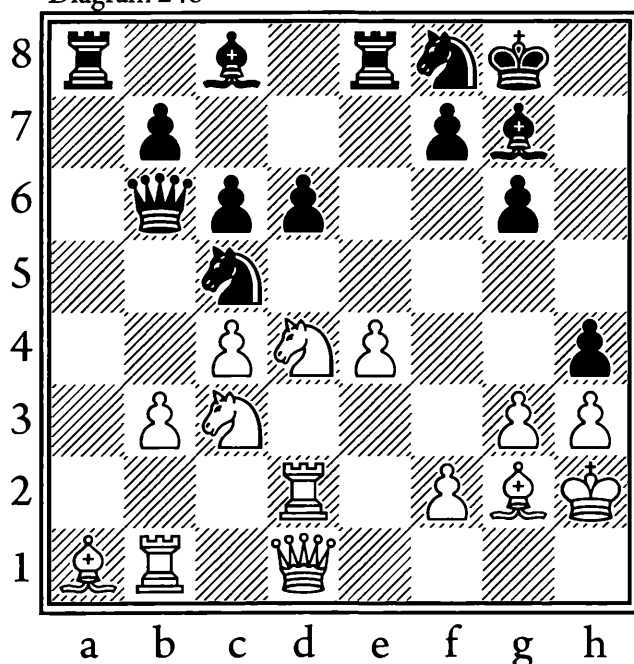
In the King's Indian, the fianchetto of both bishops was considered for a long time to be a strong set-up for White. Then, however, thanks to his subtle understanding of this defence, Bronstein conceived a brilliant plan – bringing the black queen to b6 with strong pressure against the queenside, the centre and the f2-square. He carried it out in his games – and immediately the bishop's development on b2 lost its attractiveness.

L. Pachman – D. Bronstein

Prague 1946

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘c3 e5 4.♘f3 ♘bd7
5.g3 g6 6.♙g2 ♙g7 7.0–0 0–0 8.b3
♞e8 9.e4 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘c5 11.♞e1
a5 12.♙b2 a4! 13.♞c1 c6 14.♙a1 axb3
15.axb3 ♞b6! 16.h3 ♘fd7 17.♞b1 ♘f8
18.♙h2 h5 19.♞e2 h4 20.♞d2

Diagram 248



20...♞xa1!!

The marvellous thing about this combination is that it crowns Black's profound strategic plan.

21.♞xa1 ♙xd4 22.♞xd4 ♘xb3 23.♞xd6
♞xf2!!

Black avoids the trap 23...♘xa1? 24.♘d5! and 25.♘f6†.

24.♞a2

Or 24.♞xb3 hxg3† 25.♙h1 ♙xh3 26.♞g1
♙xg2† 27.♞xg2 ♞f1† 28.♞g1 ♞h3 mate.

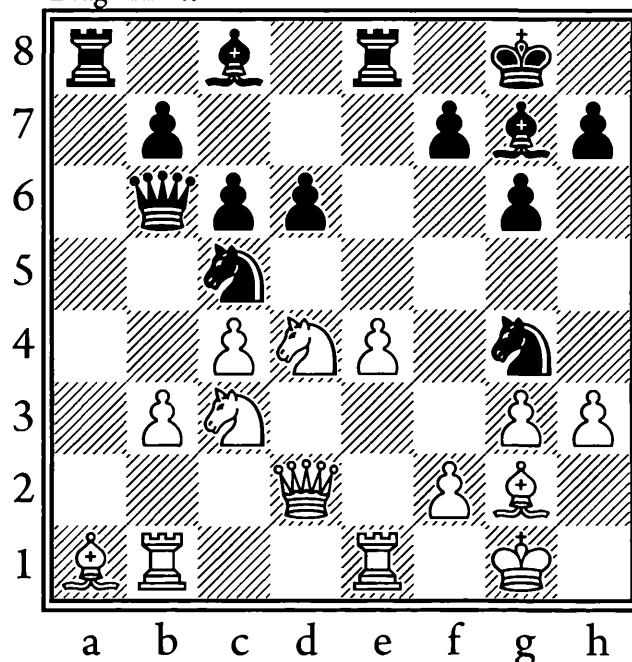
24...♞xg3† 25.♙h1 ♞xc3 26.♞a3 ♙xh3
27.♞xb3 ♙xg2† 28.♙xg2 ♞xc4 29.♞d4
♞e6 30.♞xb7 ♞a8! 31.♞e2 h3†
0–1

F. Zita – D. Bronstein

Prague 1946

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 d6 4.d4 ♘bd7
5.g3 g6 6.♙g2 ♙g7 7.0–0 0–0 8.b3 c6
9.♙b2 ♞e8 10.e4 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♞b6
12.♞d2 ♘c5 13.♞fe1 a5 14.♞ab1 a4
15.♙a1 axb3 16.axb3 ♘g4 17.h3

Diagram 249



17...♞xa1!!

Obviously this combination repeats a motif from the last game.

18.♞xa1 ♘xf2! 19.♞e3

19.♙xf2 is decisively answered by 19...♘xb3!, and 19.♚xf2 by 19...♘d3!.

19...♘h3† 20.♙h2 ♘f2! 21.♖f3

Or 21.♚xf2 ♘xd4 etc.

21...♘cxe4 22.♚f4 ♘g4† 23.♙h1 f5 24.♘xe4 ♖xe4

White resigned after six more moves.

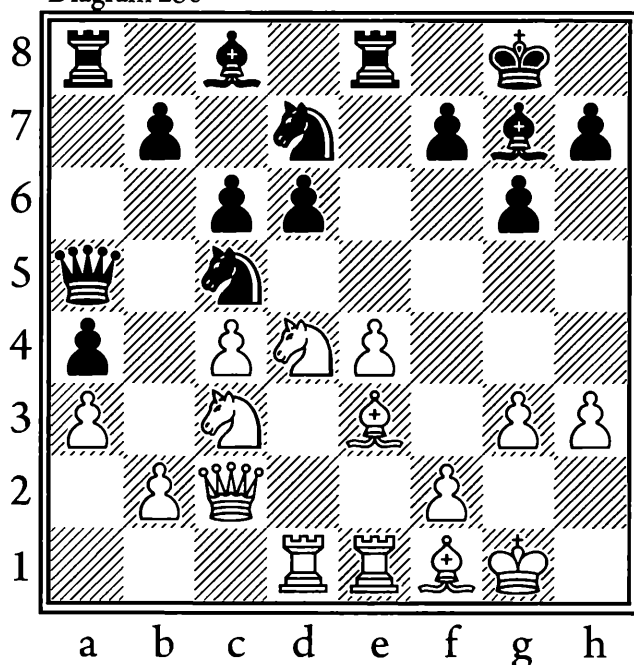
The strong position of the queen on b6 induced many players to renounce developing the white bishop on b2 in favour of placing it on e3. That way, posting the black queen on b6 was no longer very attractive. Geller then worked out a subtle idea for Black – the advance of the a-pawn to a4, followed by bringing the queen out to a5.

M. Botvinnik – E. Geller

Budapest 1952

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♙g7 4.♙g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.0–0 e5 8.e4 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c5 10.h3 ♖e8 11.♖e1 a5 12.♚c2 a4 13.♙e3 c6 14.♖ad1 ♚a5 15.a3 ♘fd7 16.♙f1

Diagram 250



16...♖e7!!

An amazingly subtle move, which could only be found by a great connoisseur of the King's Indian Defence.

Once White has completely centralized his forces in this variation, he usually goes onto the offensive with f2-f4. Right now, all Black's pieces are deployed in the best way. With 16...♖e7!! he makes a subtle waiting move which not only avoids any worsening of his position but also constitutes excellent advance preparation for White's central aggression.

There followed:

17.f4 ♘f6! 18.♙f2 ♙d7

We now see how profoundly Geller has anticipated the course of events: White is already starting to have worries due to Black's threat of doubling rooks on the e-file.

19.e5

As the further course of the game shows, this move drastically weakens the white e-pawn. Perhaps it would have been best to defend the pawn on e4 by returning the bishop to g2, especially since White would have nothing to fear from an attack on the c4-pawn by the black queen. If Black captured it, White would always have the reply ♙g2-f1!.

19...dxe5 20.fxe5 ♘e8 21.♘f3 ♙f5 22.♚e2 h5!

Securing the bishop's post on f5.

23.♙d4 ♘c7 24.♚f2 ♘7e6 25.♙e3 ♖ae8 26.♘h4 ♙xe5

Black has won a pawn, and went on to win the game.

It is not impossible that the idea of the waiting move with the rook to e7 was discovered by Geller at home in the course of his analytical investigations.

In this variation too, improvements were sub-

sequently found for White. Then connoisseurs of the King's Indian began to make less and less frequent use of the exchange in the centre with e5xd4.

Let's consider one of the contemporary ways of handling the line.

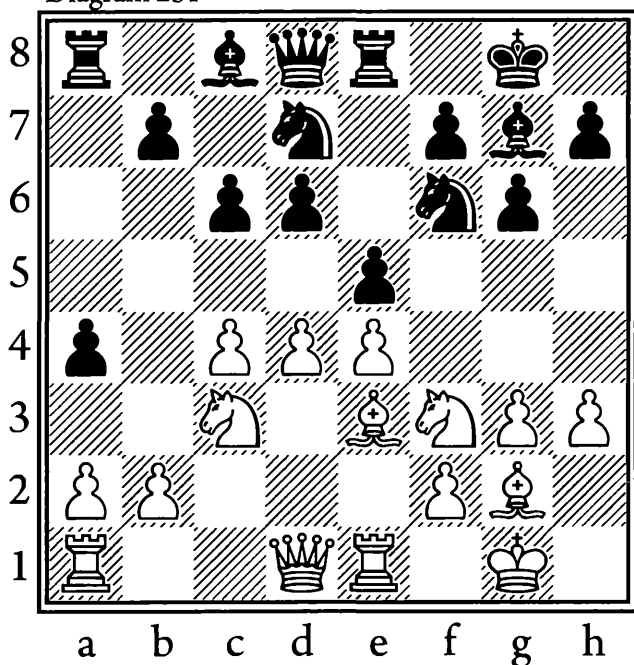
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♙g7 4.♙g2 0-0
5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.0-0 e5 8.e4 c6
9.h3 a5 10.♞e1

By defending his e-pawn a second time, White forestalls exd4 which can now be answered by ♘xd4.

10...♞e8 11.♙e3 a4

Black plays this move all the same, to secure the a5-square for his queen.

Diagram 251

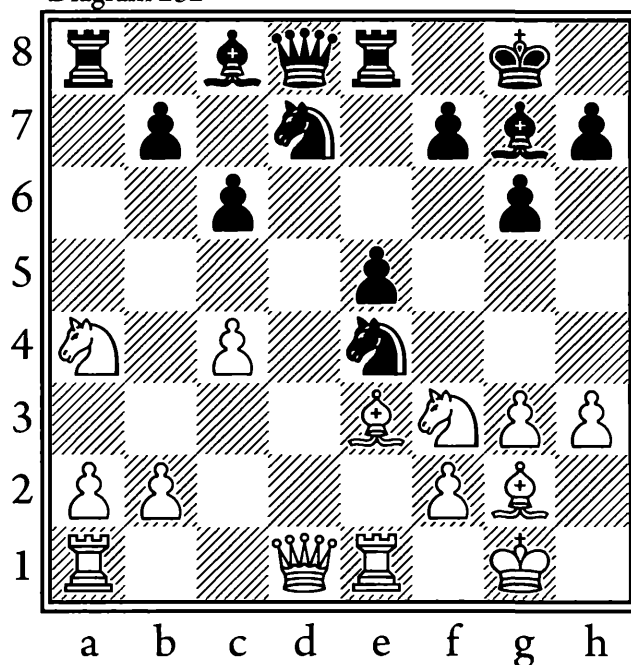


This position is gradually becoming the object of intensive and widespread investigation.

From the diagram, we may suppose that someone will have found the following idea: 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘xa4 ♘xe4 14.♙b6 ♘xb6 15.♞xd8 ♞xd8 16.♘xb6 ♞a6 17.♘xc8, and White wins. Then, however, someone else would have studied the position more carefully, and in reply to 14.♙b6 they would have unearthed 14...♞e7!!,

so as to meet 15.♞xe4 with 15...♞b4!, winning the piece back with advantage to Black. The critical position arising after Black's 13th move in this line is very interesting. Some new possibilities are coming to light.

Diagram 252



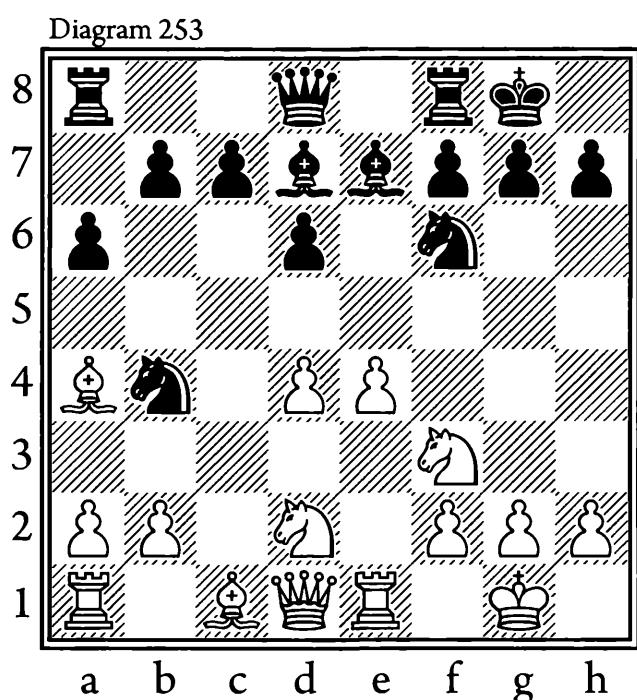
For instance, 14.♘b6! ♞a6 (14...♘xb6 loses to 15.♞xd8 ♞xd8 16.♙xb6 and 17.♞xe4) 15.♘xc8 ♞xc8 16.♞c2 f5 17.c5! ♘df6 18.♙f1 ♞a8 19.♙c4† ♖h8 20.♞ad1 f4 21.♙c1, with advantage to White. This occurred in a game Lipnitsky – Guskov (Riga 1954).

But soon an improvement in this same line may crop up for Black in turn, say 16...♘ec5 (instead of 16...f5). Furthermore someone will notice that Black can steer clear of all these variations anyway, by answering 12.dxe5 with 12...♘xe5. In this way a new critical position arises for the analysts to “descend on”.

As you will have noticed, when studying some scheme or variation we cannot confine ourselves to examining the basic critical position from which the scheme starts out. If we find the best continuation for both sides from the initial critical position, a few moves later a new critical position arises, and with it come new problems.

Let me give one example.

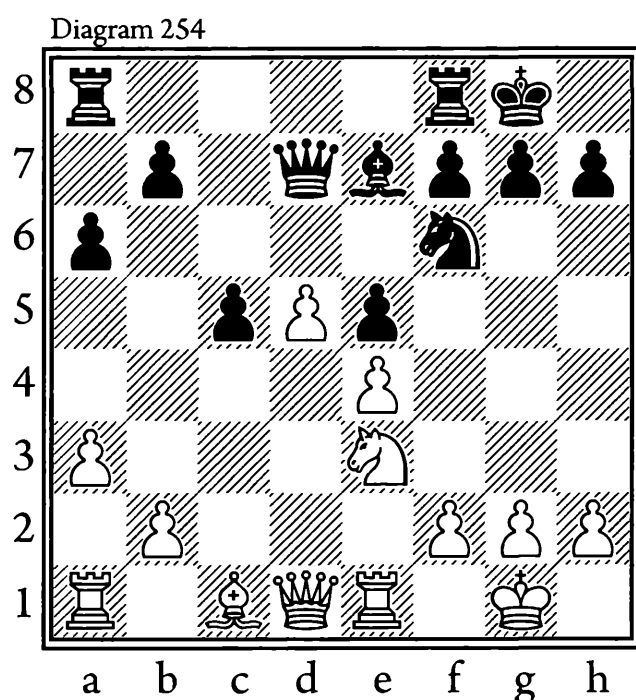
In Romanovsky's Variation of the Ruy Lopez, after 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6 5.c3 ♘f6 6.d4 ♙d7 7.♘bd2 ♙e7 8.0–0 0–0 9.♞e1 exd4 10.cxd4 ♘b4 we reach the following position.



Black has conceded the centre to his opponent in the interests of creating active counterplay on the queenside. The verdict on the entire variation depends on correctly assessing the possibilities for both sides in this position, which we will call critical position number 1. The analyses and practice have basically concentrated on the continuation 11.♙xd7 ♞xd7 12.♘f1.

In this new position, some players see no further problems. They are content to have succeeded in bringing all their pieces into action. There are quite a few others, however, who reason somewhat as follows. Since this position arises by force from the earlier one, an analysis of it will permit us to assess the whole variation more precisely than before. For these players, the situation at this stage could be called critical position number 2. When it was eventually established that the best way to continue

from here was 12...c5 13.a3 ♘c6 14.d5 ♘e5 15.♘xe5 dxe5 16.♘e3! (Kliavins – Shaposhnikov, Riga 1954), the third critical position in this variation arose.



Today this position has yet to be given a clear, definitive assessment, although many players prefer the white side. The fate of the whole variation we have been examining may depend to a significant extent on the final “judgement” on this position.

The critical positions, then, are so to speak the connecting nodes in the study and development of this or that scheme or variation. Naturally, the more critical positions a player analyses in the context of a particular variation, the more deeply he will penetrate into the truth of the matter. This is precisely what happens all the time in practical play, when victory or an advantage is attained by the art of long-range calculation, enabling you to see things that eluded your opponent altogether.

With time, the ideas and variations associated with the critical positions in this or that opening scheme will become common property, and this scheme will gradually disappear from tournament practice. But even before it

disappears, something new will be discovered.

“When we study any opening system, we introduce a new ‘production technique’; we employ this or that system only as long as it brings us benefit, then we relegate it to the archives and begin the search for a new ‘weapon’.” (Botvinnik)

And so, in the continual search for something new, in the intensive contest “for” and “against”, the theory and practice of chess develops. Studying the evolution of chess art will never be boring or tedious.

Summing up, we may say that in our day the virtuoso treatment of any particular system is achieved by the deep study of variations embracing not only the opening but also broad stretches of the middlegame.

This is why, for genuine chess masters, the opening and middlegame are so closely interconnected. The opening stage of the game is characterized by a deep purpose – it is geared to generating the player’s favourite formations and positions.

A brilliant example of such play is Botvinnik’s game with Capablanca – which took place, by the way, when the former was not yet World Champion and the latter no longer was.

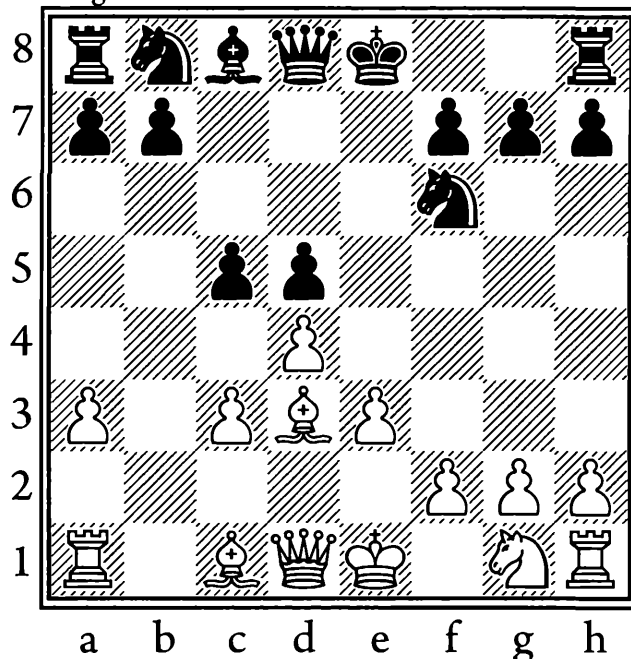
M. Botvinnik – J.R. Capablanca

Amsterdam 1938

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 d5 5.a3 ♙xc3† 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♙d3!

Why does White bring his bishop out to d3 rather than his knight to f3? It already emerges that he is not simply mobilizing his forces but purposefully heading towards a well-defined scheme and the implementation of a profound plan.

Diagram 255



The substance of this plan is a broad and thoroughly prepared offensive in the centre and on the kingside, utilizing an advance of the e- and f-pawns. To this end, the bishop is developed on d3 and the knight is transferred via e2 to g3.

8...0–0 9.♘e2 b6! 10.0–0 ♙a6!

Capablanca starts to fight against White’s plan, and opposes it with a plan of his own. By exchanging the light-squared bishops he aims to reduce his opponent’s kingside pressure and weaken the light squares on the queenside, with a view to active operations in that sector.

11.♙xa6

White could preserve his bishop by withdrawing it to c2, but then the black bishop would also be preserved on a6. By exchanging on that square, White puts the black knight in an inferior position.

11...♘xa6 12.♙b2

When White carries through his central break with e3-e4, his d4-pawn will be vulnerable; so he protects it in advance. But since there was no urgent need for this as yet, the text move amounts to an error, making it easier for Black to work up a counter-initiative. These days,

White plays an immediate 12.f3.

12...♖d7! 13.a4

The reply to 13.♖d3 would be 13...♖a4! with a blockade of the white queenside.

13...♜fe8 14.♖d3 c4

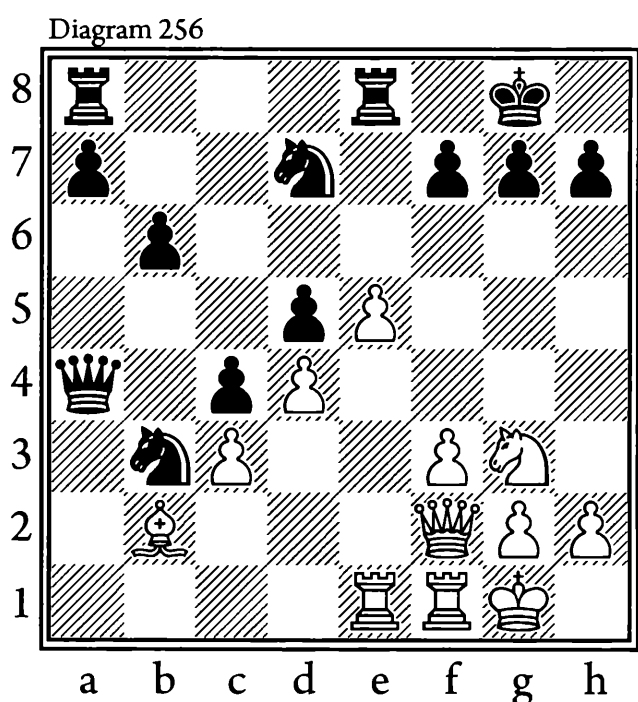
Black reciprocates with errors of his own.

At move 13, “The continuation 13...cxd4! was not at all difficult to find. Then after 14.cxd4 ♜fc8 White would have difficulties on the c-file – although he would still probably have adequate defensive resources at his disposal.” (Botvinnik)

And then with 14...c4, Black not only renounces the possibility of counterplay in the c-file; by taking the pressure off the d4-pawn he also makes it easier for White to break in the centre with e3-e4. But Black wants to win the white a-pawn by executing the manoeuvre ♖a6-b8-c6-a5-b3.

15.♖c2 ♖b8 16.♜ae1 ♖c6 17.♖g3 ♖a5 18.f3 ♖b3 19.e4! ♜xa4 20.e5 ♖d7 21.♖f2

The fight is in full swing.



In the middlegame both sides continue implementing their opening plans. White advances

in the centre and on the kingside, Black on the queenside. White's threats prove the more dangerous. He is threatening to mount an assault with his f-pawn and also to bring his knight from g3 to f5 and d6.

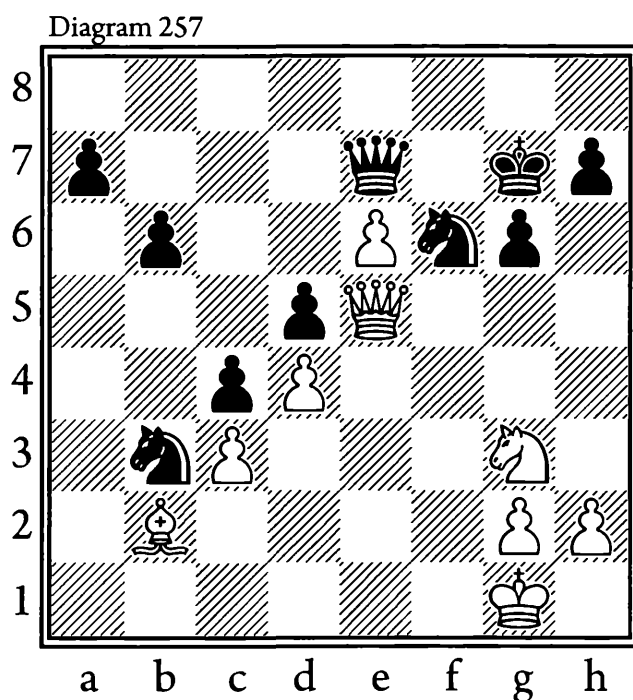
21...g6 22.f4 f5 23.exf6! ♖xf6 24.f5 ♜xe1 25.♜xe1 ♜e8

There was a better defence in 25...♜f8 – but even so, as Botvinnik shows, White would have a strong initiative after 26.♖f4 ♖d7 27.♜e6 ♖a5 28.♜a3 ♜f7 29.♖g5. A brilliant concluding attack now follows.

26.♜e6! ♜xe6

Or 26...♖g7 27.♜xf6! ♖xf6 28.fxg6† ♖xg6 29.♖f5† etc.

27.fxe6 ♖g7 28.♖f4 ♖e8 29.♖e5 ♖e7



30.♜a3!! ♜xa3

Or 30...♖e8 31.♖c7† ♖g8 32.♜e7 ♖g4 33.♖d7 etc.

31.♖h5†!

Given the scant material left on the board, the double sacrifice is very pretty.

31...gxh5 32.♖g5† ♖f8 33.♖xf6† ♖g8

34.e7!

And Black resigned once the white king had escaped from perpetual check:

**34...♔c1† 35.♔f2 ♔c2† 36.♔g3 ♔d3†
37.♔h4 ♔e4† 38.♔xh5 ♔e2† 39.♔h4
♔e4† 40.g4 ♔e1† 41.♔h5
1-0**

This game served as the pattern for many others in which similar plans were realized. It is most useful, for instance, to acquaint yourself with Botvinnik – Alexander (Radio match USSR v Great Britain, 1946) and two games from Stockholm 1952: Averbakh – Golombek and Kotov – Unzicker. Let's examine the last of these.

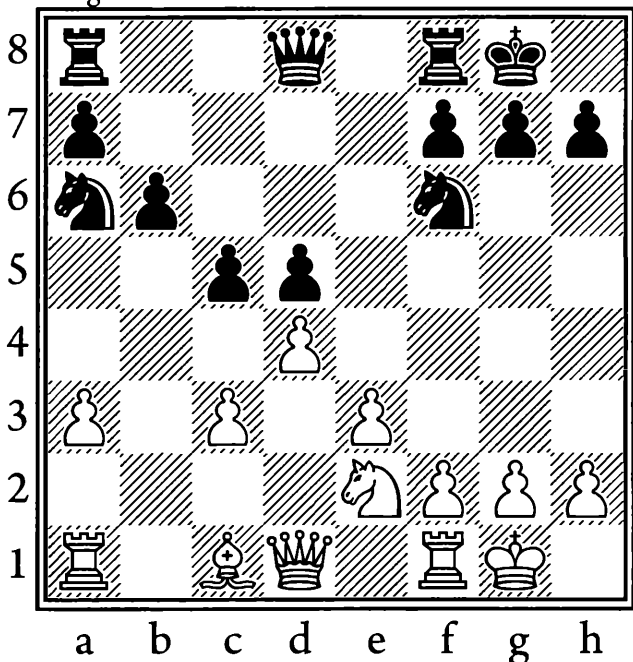
A. Kotov – W. Unzicker

Stockholm 1952

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 d5 5.a3
♗xc3† 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♗d3 0-0
9.♘e2 b6 10.0-0 ♗a6 11.♗xa6 ♘xa6**

As we can see, the first eleven moves are identical with the Botvinnik – Capablanca game.

Diagram 258

**12.f3**

This is a model case of the specific and deep study of middlegame positions and schemes.

The diagram position has occurred in numerous games as the outcome of an opening line with which both opponents were happy. Many players of this line have focused their attention not so much on analysing the first eleven moves as on a concrete study of the position to which they lead. The result of these studies is the twelfth move that Kotov makes here. He writes about it as follows:

“In a number of games White played 12.♗d3 at this point, then after 12...c4 he would retreat his queen and prepare an advance of his centre pawns with f2-f3 and e3-e4. Soon, however, it was concluded that Black has no need to answer 12.♗d3 with 12...c4. By continuing 12...♞c7 he can maintain the tension in the centre and obtain an acceptable game. This is why in the present game White decided not to lose time with 12.♗d3 but to set about advancing his pawn centre at once.”

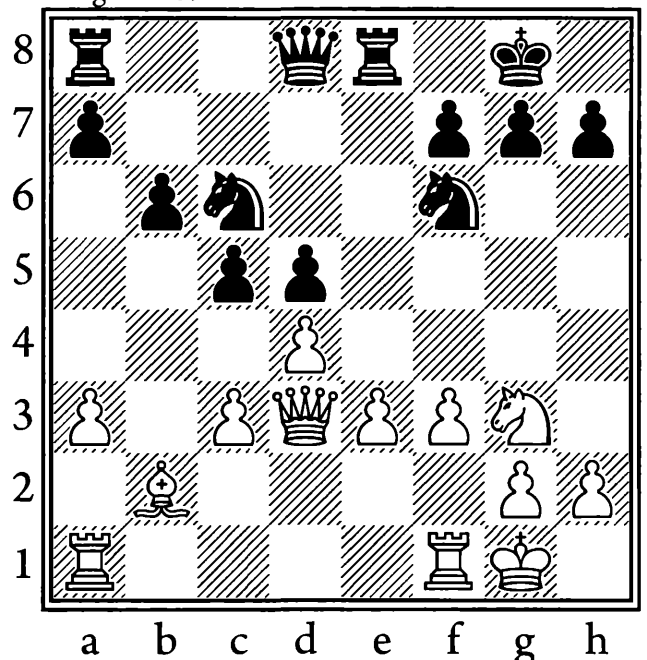
12...♞b8 13.♗d3

White plays this move only now, when the black knight can no longer go to c7.

13...♞e8 14.♘g3 ♘c6 15.♗b2

The theme of the last few moves has been the struggle “for” and “against” the e3-e4 advance.

Diagram 259



15...♖c8 16.♞ae1 h6

After 16...c4 17.♞c2 b5 18.e4 g6 19.e5 ♞d7 20.f4 f5, White continues the attack by means of 21.exf6 ♞xf6 22.f5! on the analogy of Botvinnik – Capablanca.

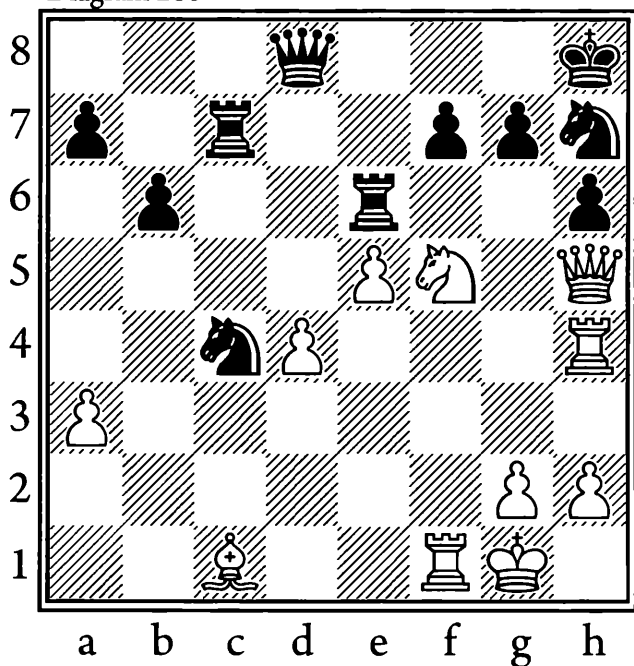
17.e4 cxd4 18.cxd4 dxe4 19.fxe4 ♞e5 20.♞d1 ♞c4 21.♙c1

“Black’s position is lost – he has nothing to oppose White’s powerful pawn centre. In addition White’s threats on the kingside are extremely dangerous, and Black is unable to defend the points g7 and h6.” (Kotov)

21...♞h7 22.e5 ♞e6 23.♞e4 ♞f8 24.♞f5 ♙h8 25.♞h5 ♞c7 26.♞h4 ♞h7

In such a strong attacking position, it is more than likely that there will be combinations to finish the game off.

Diagram 260



27.♞xg7! ♙xg7 28.♙xh6† ♙g8 29.♞g4† ♞g6 30.e6! 1–0

In the games we have looked at, the transition from opening to middlegame (somewhere around the 12th move) occurred more or less imperceptibly. Purposeful development

according to a well-defined scheme, a unified plan – this joined the opening and middlegame into a monolithic whole.

Among the strongest modern players, then, the study of an opening is inseparably linked to a study of the middlegames that arise from it. The focus is very much on the concrete analysis of transitional and typical positions, with the aim of disclosing their underlying possibilities (that is, ideas, plans, combinations) to as great a depth as possible.

In practice, the division of the game into opening and middlegame phases is to some extent arbitrary. The point is that the same laws and elements of chess strategy and tactics operate in the opening as in the middlegame, but with just one basic peculiarity – the development of the pieces from their starting squares. At the same time, in Capablanca’s words, “the fundamental principle of the middlegame consists in co-ordinating the pieces” which have already been brought into action.

Today only the combined study of opening and middlegame enables us to assess correctly the merits and defects of particular systems and variations.

Reevaluation of Values

“If this move was not played before, it merely proves once again that Theory is a short-sighted lady.” This allegorical statement of Alekhine’s can be used without hesitation as an epigraph for the whole of opening theory.

But then, we could scarcely *expect* opening theory as a whole to be particularly “long-sighted”, given that it embraces tens of thousands of different variations which are given a distinctly shallow evaluation. Most of the time this evaluation is based not on specialized analyses (which are often less than infallible anyway), but on the results (or on a superficial examination) of a relatively small number of games.

As far back as 1902, Chigorin wrote: “They say that ‘theory’ at the present time has been elaborated to such an extent that an amateur, unfamiliar with a mass of ‘theoretical’ variations, has no chance of contending with an opponent who not only knows all these variations but can even remember the pages of the book where they are printed. ... I have more than once had occasion to demolish this popular opinion in private conversations, but I have not met many supporters of my own views on contemporary theory. I once stated that of the thirty thousand variations in the *Handbuch* [Bilguer’s *Handbuch*, a fundamental work on

the openings – I.L.], a good half are either mistaken or appear dubious, since the verdict on them has not been upheld in the games of top-class players.”

Another remark of Chigorin’s about one variation cited in a theoretical manual is also characteristic: “How many unsound or doubtful variations are given in the books, relating to a basically uncomplicated position!” This utterance retains its topicality even today.

The vast bulk of new and old opening variations – or perhaps it would be more correct to say continuations – is essentially virgin territory. If you subject these continuations to painstaking analysis, then in many cases you can find a wealth of new, as yet undisclosed possibilities.

When a player refutes some variation or discovers something new, he experiences genuine creative satisfaction. His capacity to approach theoretical assessments critically is the best indication of his creative maturity.

I once happened to see a copy of a bulky openings reference book belonging to David Bronstein, who was then still only a Master. Most pages of this tome were scattered with question marks and various refutations or additions. Quite obviously Bronstein had no intention

of studying the immense multitude of variations in that book. The vast inquisitive scope and creative activity of his thought were all the more astonishing.

The stronger a chessplayer is, the less trust he places in theoretical variations and the more he relies on his own creative efforts. The theory of variations evolves with a continual revaluation of values: today such-and-such a variation or continuation is held to be good, by tomorrow it will be bad, but the day *after* tomorrow, conceivably, it will be good again. These days an especially well-cultivated aspect of opening preparation consists in “revaluing” certain variations, then proving over-the-board that what was considered bad is actually good – and scoring a treasured point as the reward for your creative industry.

However, this method of preparation is not new; it has been known for a long time. Let’s turn to some examples.

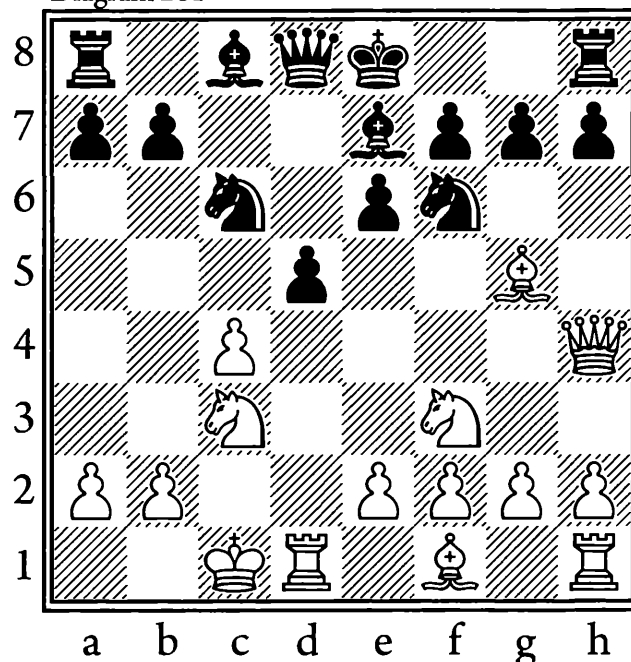
H. Pillsbury – Em. Lasker

St Petersburg 1896

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 c5
5.♙g5 cxd4 6.♚xd4 ♘c6 7.♚h4 ♙e7
8.0–0–0

This continuation is prompted by White’s wish to seize the initiative, but the possibility of a rapid black counter-attack along the c-file makes it risky.

Diagram 261



8...♚a5 9.e3 ♙d7 10.♚b1

White realizes he has to do something about the safety of his king.

10...h6 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♘d4 0–0!

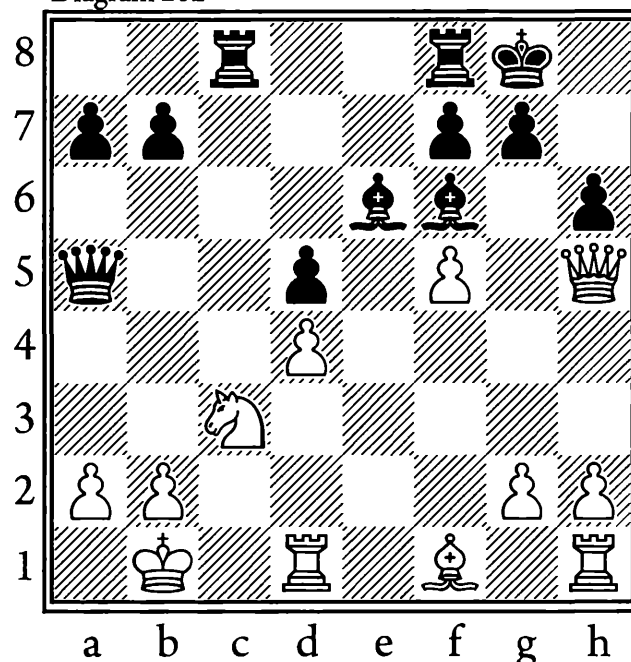
Well played! White is now forced to take f6, as 13.♙xh6 or 13.♙f4 would be refuted by 12...♘e4!.

13.♙xf6 ♙xf6 14.♚h5 ♘xd4 15.♙e6 ♙e6 16.f4

White hastens to create counter-chance on the kingside. A possibility was the defensive manoeuvre ♘c3–e4–d2–b3.

16...♚ac8 17.f5

Diagram 262



17...♖xc3!!

To this day there is no harm in learning some attacking skills from the many distinguished masters of the past.

18.fxe6

Or 18.bxc3 ♖xc3 19.fxe6 ♖b4†! with a winning attack.

18...♖a3! 19.exf7† ♖xf7 20.bxa3 ♖b6†!

For his sacrificed rook Black has obtained an immensely strong attack.

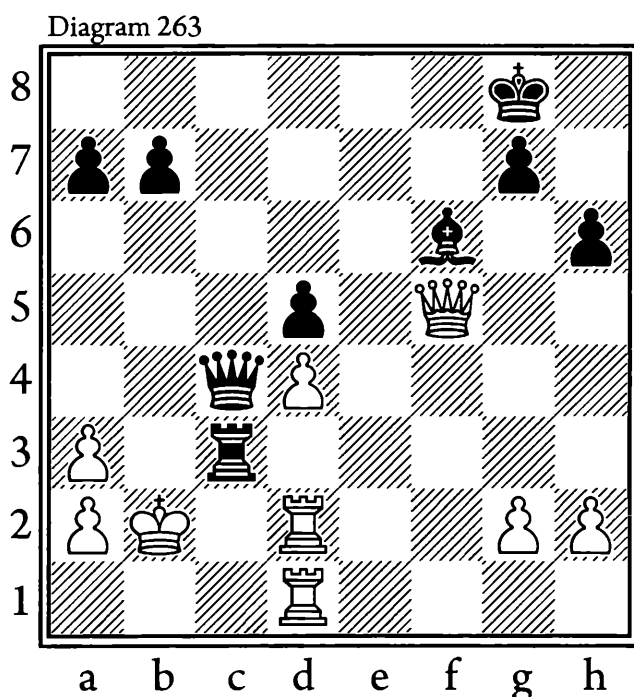
21.♗b5

Played to divert the black queen from the d4-square. On 21.♔c2, Black would win with 21...♖c7† 22.♔d2 ♖xd4† 23.♗d3 ♖c2†!.

21...♖xb5† 22.♔a1 ♖c7

Lasker notes that in time trouble he missed the simple win that could have been achieved by 22...♖c4!.

23.♖d2 ♖c4 24.♖hd1 ♖c3 25.♖f5 ♖c4 26.♔b2



26...♖xa3!!

A brilliant finale. The second black rook has

followed the route of the first, and offers itself as a sacrifice on the same square, a3! The work of the black rooks in this game makes a tremendous impression.

27.♖e6† ♔h7 28.♔xa3 ♖c3† 29.♔a4 b5†! 30.♔xb5 ♖c4†

It is mate in two moves.

After White's crushing defeat in this game, the "theorists" promptly declared that 6.♖xd4 was bad. But Pillsbury did not believe them. Analysing the opening, he found where he had gone wrong. He kept his discovery a secret for a long time, waiting for a chance to avenge himself on the World Champion in this same variation.

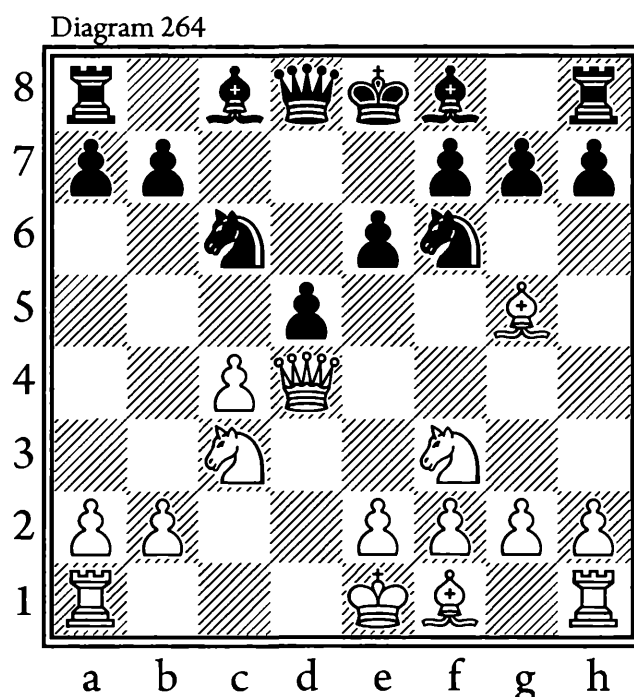
Finally, eight years later, such an opportunity arose.

H. Pillsbury – Em. Lasker

Cambridge Springs 1904

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 c5 5.♗g5 cxd4 6.♖xd4 ♘c6

So the first six moves are repeated.



But now instead of 7.♖h4, there followed:

7.♔xf6!

Here it is – the revaluation of values! White’s strengthening of the variation consists in forcing Black to take on f6 with the g-pawn, since other replies would lose material.

7...gxf6 8.♖h4!

Threatening to capture on d5.

8...dxc4

If 8...d4 then 9.0–0–0!, which in these circumstances is strong. For example, 9...e5 10.e3! is in White’s favour.

9.♖d1 ♔d7 10.e3 ♘e5 11.♘xe5 fxe5
12.♖xc4 ♖b6 13.♔e2!

White does not waste time defending his pawn.

13...♖xb2 14.0–0 ♖c8 15.♖d3 ♖c7
16.♘e4

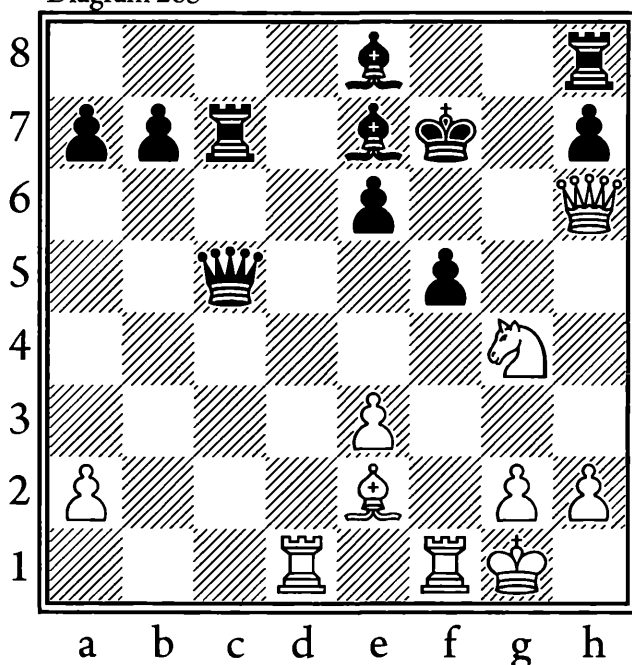
White is working up a powerful attack.

16...♔e7 17.♘d6† ♔f8 18.♘c4 ♖b5
19.f4! exf4 20.♖d4!

In view of the threatened ♖xf4 with attacks against f7 and c7, Black is forced to accept further weaknesses.

20...f6 21.♖xf4 ♖c5 22.♘e5 ♔e8 23.♘g4
f5 24.♖h6† ♔f7

Diagram 265



25.♔c4!

White conducts the attack beautifully.

25...♖c6 26.♖xf5†! ♖xf5 27.♖f1 ♖xf1†
28.♔xf1 ♔d7

Despite material parity, there is absolutely nothing Black can do.

29.♖h5† ♔g8 30.♘e5

It will be mate in a few moves. Sweet revenge! After this game there was a search for an improvement for Black, and 6...♔e7 was found. The reply 6...♘c6 was pronounced bad by “theory”, and in many theoretical handbooks it has figured as such to this day. In actual fact, what we see here is a decidedly superficial verdict founded solely on the result of a game that Pillsbury had won. Lasker himself pointed out that after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 c5 5.♔g5 cxd4 6.♖xd4 ♘c6 7.♔xf6 gxf6 8.♖h4 dxc4 9.♖d1 ♔d7 10.e3, Black could have replied 10...f5! with quite a good game. With this in mind, Pillsbury’s innovation with 7.♔xf6 was good enough for no more than equality.

An opening novelty will often arise as the result of improving on one or several moves in an already familiar variation or game. Countless innovations have come into being in this way and continue to do so.

That the emergence of innovations is only natural was stated by Chigorin in the magazine *Shakhmaty* back in 1894:

“I would point out that ‘something new’ occurs in every game without fail, given that one game doesn’t repeat another from the starting position right up to mate.”

Sometimes an innovation possesses such murderous strength as to make a whole variation impossible to repeat. We recall how Botvinnik used an innovation to defeat Grandmaster

Spielmann in 12(!) moves. Let's look at that miniature:

M. Botvinnik – R. Spielmann

Moscow 1935

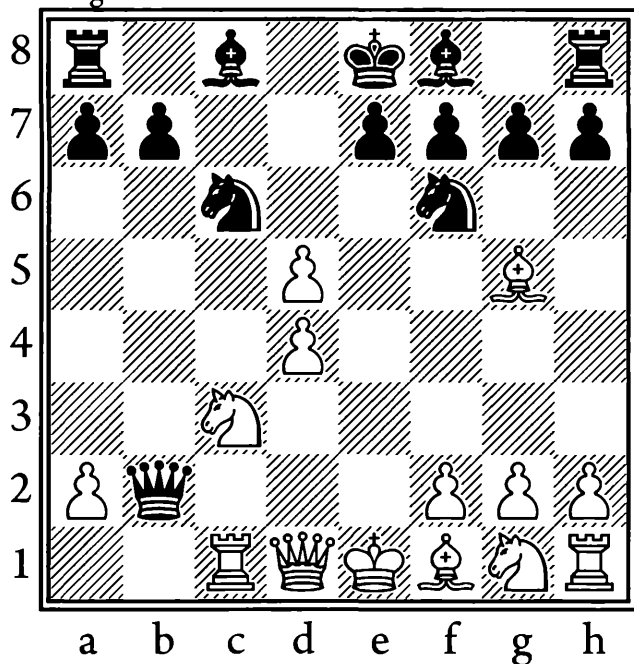
1.c4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 ♚b6

A year earlier, Spielmann had had this move played against him. He replied 7.c5? ♚xb2! 8.♘ge2, and was left with a difficult game after 8...♙f5 (Spielmann – Rejfir, Maribor 1934).

This time he was hoping to use 6...♚b6 to make trouble for Botvinnik. But to his misfortune, Botvinnik had analysed this position and found the complete refutation of 6...♚b6. There followed:

7.cxd5! ♚xb2 8.♙c1!

Diagram 266



8...♘b4

Or 8...♘d8 9.♙xf6! exf6 10.♙b5† with an extremely strong attack.

9.♘a4! ♚xa2 10.♙c4

Now in order to save his queen, Black will have to give up a piece.

10...♙g4 11.♘f3 ♙xf3 12.gxf3
1–0

In the following game, Botvinnik had to fight against a novelty himself. And since his opponent was Alekhine, the events took on an extremely intense character.

A. Alekhine – M. Botvinnik

Nottingham 1936

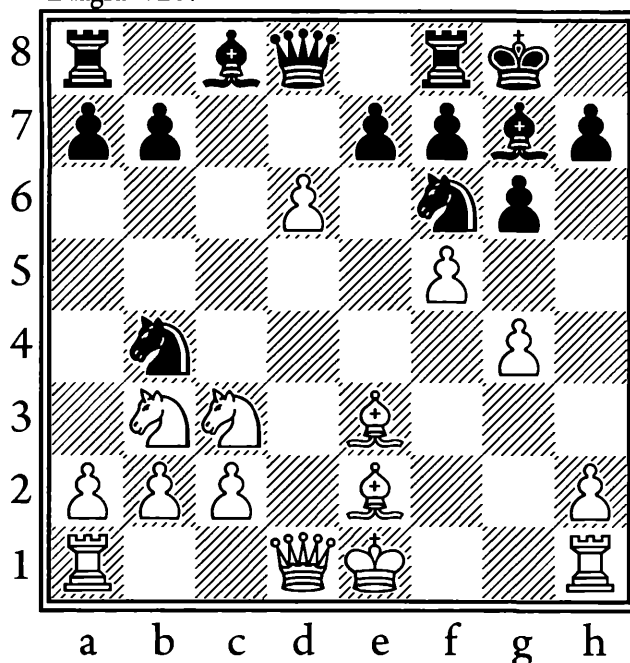
After the moves:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.♙e3 ♘c6 8.♘b3
♙e6 9.f4 0–0 10.g4 d5 11.f5 ♙c8 12.exd5
♘b4

Alekhine unexpectedly played:

13.d6

Diagram 267



In his annotations to the game, Botvinnik wrote:

“Not every master could have noticed this move, as the pawn sacrifice is most surprising; its idea is to weaken Black on f6. I succeeded in ‘wriggling out’ of this difficult situation. At

the critical moment in my search for a saving line I had to think for about twenty minutes, and Alekhine spent that time walking round our table. Nonetheless, by summoning up all my will-power, I managed to shake off this strong ‘psychological’ pressure and find the way out of the trap he had set for me.”

13...♙xd6!

13...exd6 is obviously bad on account of 14.g5 and 15.f6.

14.♔c5!

A second surprise! After 14.♙xd6 exd6, White would not succeed with 15.g5 in view of 15...♘xc2†. But if now 14...♙xd1†, White plays 15.♙xd1! ♘c6 (or 15...♘xc2† 16.♔d2) 16.g5! and 17.f6, with an obvious advantage.

14...♙f4!

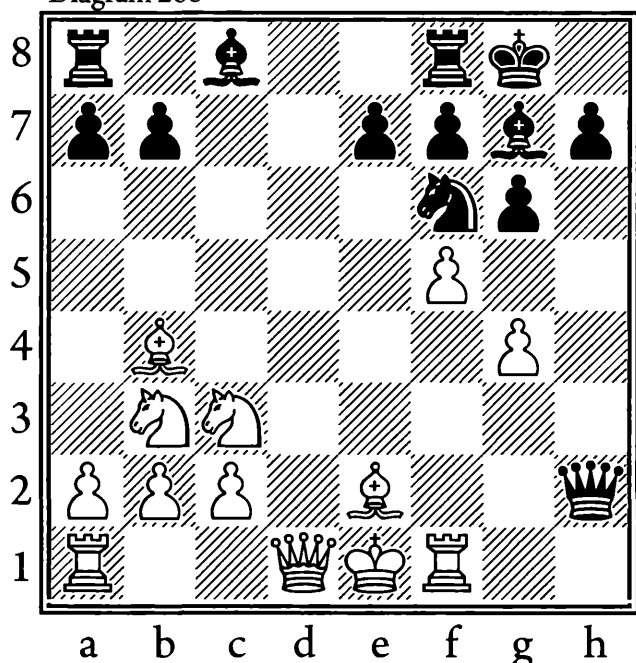
The only answer, as the knight on b4 is under attack.

15.♙f1!

Further unpleasantness – Black has to give up a piece.

15...♙xh2 16.♔xb4

Diagram 268



16...♘xg4!!

By giving up his other knight, Botvinnik escapes defeat.

17.♔xg4 ♙g3† 18.♙f2 ♙g1† 19.♙f1 ♙g3† 20.♙f2 ♙g1†

With a draw by perpetual check.

Botvinnik defended himself with enviable sangfroid and discovered over-the-board the sole antidote to Alekhine’s novelty. Alekhine was to remark of this encounter: “a short but sharp and well played game”.

Incidentally, in answer to 11.f5 in this variation, some players today are working on the interesting continuation 11...gxf5!?.

Our next game is another model case of astounding sangfroid, exhibited this time by Capablanca in the face of his opponent’s stunning novelty.

After the Capablanca – Marshall match (New York 1909) in which the latter player suffered defeat with a score of +1 –8 =14, Grandmaster Marshall avoided defending the Ruy Lopez against Capablanca for a full ten years. However, after working out his sharp attacking line based on a pawn sacrifice, Marshall used it against his formidable opponent in the very first round of the Manhattan Club’s master tournament.

J.R. Capablanca – F. Marshall

New York 1918

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♔b5 a6 4.♔a4 ♘f6 5.0–0 ♔e7 6.♙e1 b5 7.♔b3 0–0 8.c3 d5!?

White’s queenside being still undeveloped, Black strives to open lines, so as to launch a swift attack on the white king.

9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘xe5

Annotating this game, Capablanca wrote:

“I thought for some time before taking the pawn, realizing that after this I would be facing a ferocious attack which my opponent had carefully worked out. But I was filled with a thirst for battle. I felt that a challenge had been thrown down to me by a player who had every reason to fear my understanding and skill (as our previous encounters had shown), but who had prepared a stock of surprises for me and wanted to exploit my unfamiliarity with the lines to which he had devoted many nights of hard, persistent work. I examined the situation and decided that my reputation, so to speak, obliged me to take the pawn and accept the challenge, for my understanding and insight told me that White’s position would be defensible.”

Though not exactly remarkable for its modesty, this statement does show clearly enough how a great master’s mind works when faced with an unexpected problem.

10...♖xe5 11.♗xe5 ♘f6

Today 11...c6 is preferred.

12.♖e1 ♕d6 13.h3 ♘g4! 14.♕f3!

Capturing the knight would lose to 14...♕h4. On f3 the queen occupies a very strong post, defending and attacking simultaneously.

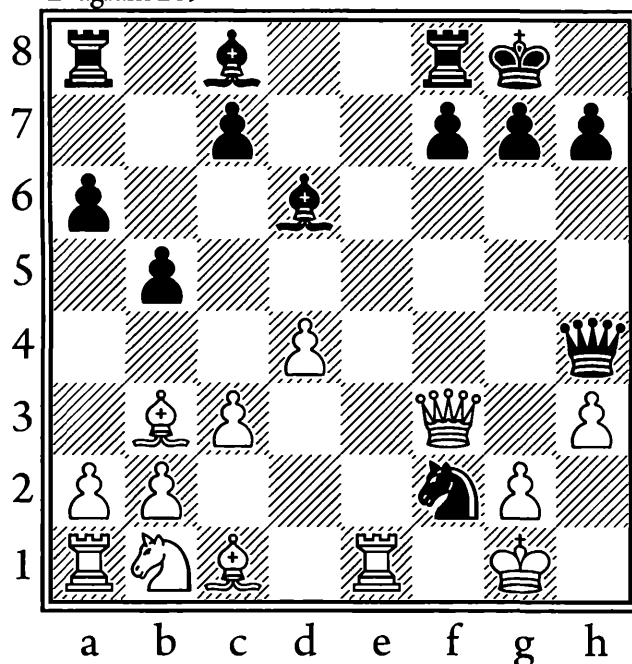
14...♕h4 15.d4!

Under fire, White hastens to develop and avoids all the traps. After 15.♖e8 ♕b7! 16.♖xf8† ♖xf8 17.♕xg4 ♖e8! 18.♖f1 ♕e7 19.♕e6 ♕d5! Black would achieve a clear plus.

15...♖xf2

“The digger of the pit has fallen into it himself – this knight will never get out of here again. But Black had nothing better; the only thing left for him to do was attack at all costs, to conquer or die.” (Capablanca)

Diagram 269



16.♖e2!!

By finding the sole move to repulse the attack in this complex and, for him, unfamiliar position, Capablanca demonstrates the exceptional mastery of defence that was his hallmark. He cannot, for instance, play 16.♕xf2 on account of 16...♕h2†! (but not 16...♕g3? 17.♕xf7† and mates) 17.♖f1 ♕g3 18.♖e2 ♕xh3! 19.gxh3 ♖ae8, and Black wins.

16...♕g4 17.hxg4 ♕h2† 18.♖f1 ♕g3 19.♖xf2 ♕h1† 20.♖e2 ♕xf2 21.♕d2 ♕h4 22.♕h3 ♖ae8† 23.♖d3 ♕f1† 24.♖c2

Having brought his king to safety, Capablanca won the game on the 36th move. Black’s fierce attack, prepared in peace and quiet at home, foundered on a mighty defence – which, as in Alekhine – Botvinnik, was discovered over the board.

The examples we have looked at have involved *correct* novelties, by which an old variation was strengthened or a wholly new continuation emerged. This perfectly well includes the Marshall Attack, in which new possibilities have been unearthed for Black.

On the other hand, players will sometimes employ a kind of novelty which essentially amounts to bluff. It can be refuted by

objective analysis – but the opponent doesn't always manage to do this over-the-board. When you play a novelty without being entirely convinced of its soundness yourself, you are usually banking above all on producing a psychological effect. As a rule, the more your novelty looks outwardly unsound to your opponent – especially if it entails sacrifices – the greater its psychological impact will be. Your opponent will think he is under an obligation, so to speak, to find a refutation. He will immerse himself in lengthy calculations and start fretting; and he will often choose weak replies which have the very effect of justifying your novelty. We do not have to go far, as they say, to find examples.

A. Suetin – I. Lipnitsky

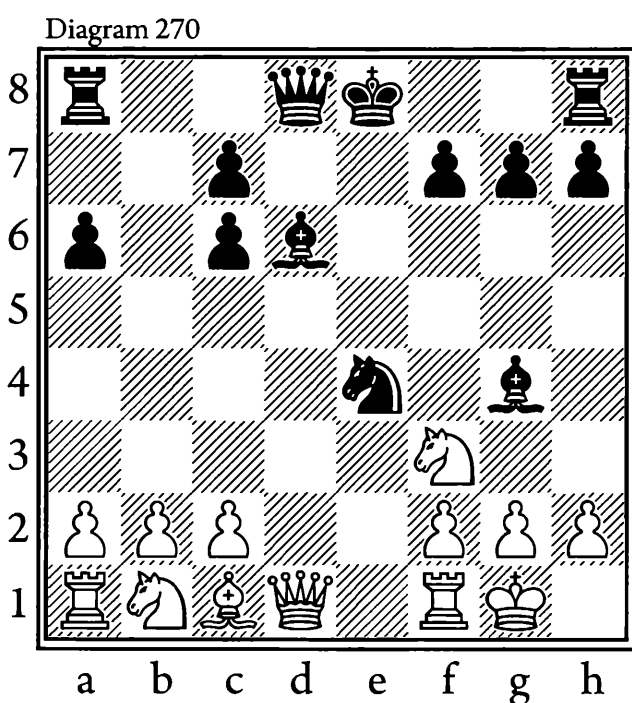
Moscow 1952

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0–0 d6 6.♙xc6† bxc6 7.d4

Black now employed a new continuation:

7...♙g4 8.dxe5 ♘xe4 9.exd6 ♙xd6!?

It feels as though there ought to be a refutation of the novelty.



Indeed the position of the black knight on the same open file as its own king gives White a wealth of possibilities. Suetin had a long think, probably reckoning that the win was “in the bag”. The game continued:

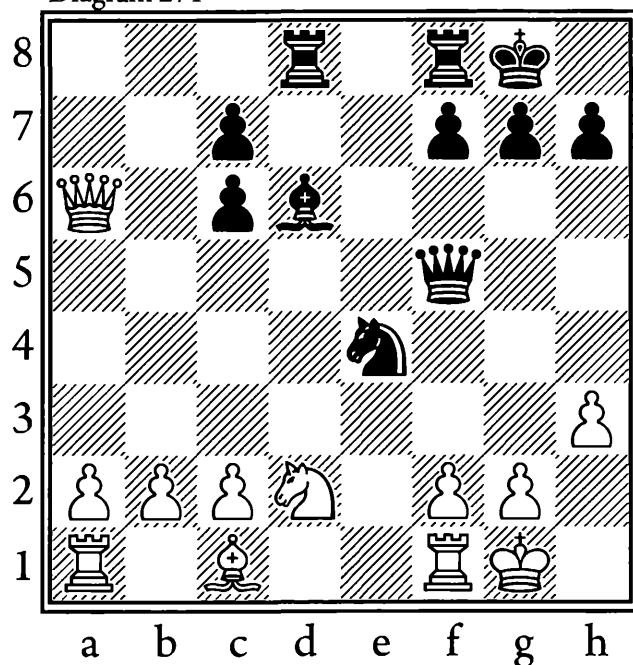
10.h3

In chess it often happens that a wholly obvious, straightforward measure, such as 10.♙e2 (or 10.♙e1), is for some reason rejected in favour of something more refined. But then – as has long been known – where a thread is too fine, it snaps.

10...♙f5 11.♘d4 ♙f6 12.♙d3 ♙d8
13.♘xf5 ♙xf5 14.♙xa6 0–0 15.♘d2

White has won a pawn but landed in a lost position.

Diagram 271



15...♙xf2! 16.♙xf2 ♙c5 17.♙f1 ♙fe8

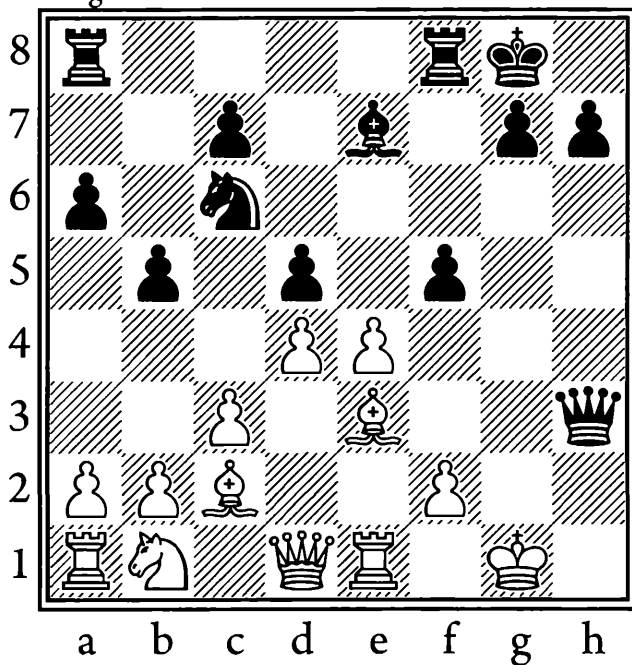
Black's attack is decisive.

In this case the psychological effect of the novelty played a major role. The easier it looked at first sight, the more difficult it actually proved for Suetin to refute Black's novelty. Some readers may feel like finding the refutation of 7...♙g4 8.dxe4 ♘xe4 9.exd6 ♙xd6!? for themselves. In that case, while they are about it,

I venture to suggest another of my novelties to them. This one also arises in the Ruy Lopez.

After 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 d6 6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 ♙e7 8.c3 0-0 9.d4 ♙g4 10.♙e3 ♘xe4 11.♙d5 ♖d7 12.♙xe4 d5 13.♙c2 e4 14.h3, Black continues, not with 14...♙h5, but with 14...♙xf3 15.gxf3 ♖xh3 16.fxe4, and now 16...f5!?

Diagram 272



White is a piece for a pawn up. Who is better in this position?

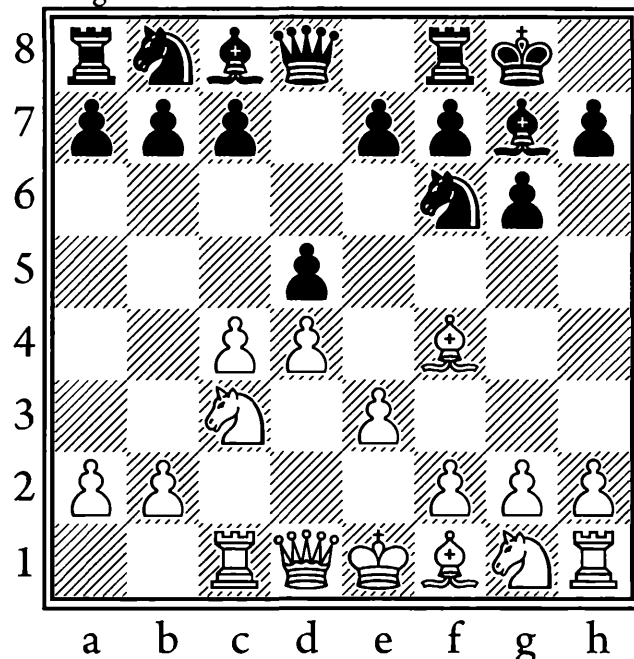
It is most unpleasant when your opponent succeeds in proving that your innovation, far from being an improvement, is actually worse than what had been played previously in the same variation.

A. Tolush – M. Botvinnik

Leningrad 1939

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♙f4 ♙g7 5.e3 0-0 6.♖c1

Diagram 273



In his annotations to the game (I give excerpts in quotation marks), Botvinnik writes:

“The moment Tolush quickly played 6.♖c1 against me, it became clear that he had found some ‘drastic remedy’... Nonetheless, spurred on by curiosity, I decided to repeat all Reshevsky’s moves (the game Capablanca – Reshevsky, Amsterdam 1938, had gone exactly like this, with equality soon resulting), for I was very interested to know what it was that Tolush had discovered.”

6...c5 7.dxc5 ♖a5

“In a later game with Ragozin (Leningrad 1940), I managed to find Black’s strongest continuation in this position: 7...♙e6!”

8.cxd5 ♖d8 9.♖d2

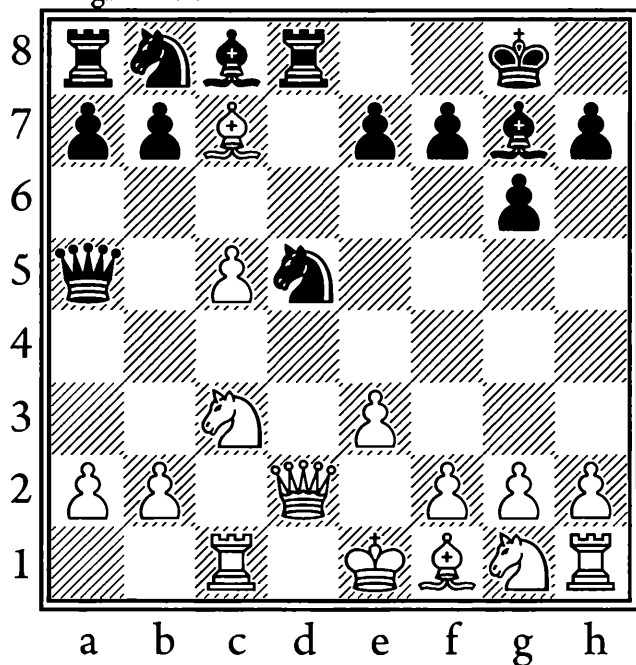
“This is Tolush’s ‘improvement’. The Capablanca – Reshevsky game went 9.♖a4 ♖xa4 10.♘xa4 ♘xd5 11.♙b5 ♘xf4 12.exf4 ♙e6 13.b3 ♙d5 etc.

However, in his home analysis Tolush hadn’t seen anything like all the subtleties.”

9...♘xd5 10.♙c7!?

(See diagram next page)

Diagram 274



This is the point of the “innovation”. After the forced reply:

10...Qxc7 11.Nxd5

Tolush thought he had a won position – for instance, 11...Qd7 12.Rd1 e6 13.Nc7!.

But Botvinnik shatters these hopes, finding the refutation over-the-board.

11...Rxd5!

Sacrificing the exchange, Black seizes the initiative.

12.Qxd5 Qe6 13.Qd2 Nc6 14.Rd1 Rd8 15.Qc1 Qa5† 16.Rd2 Rxd5!

Black picks up all the queenside pawns.

17.Ne2 Rxc5 18.Nc3 Qxc3 19.bxc3 Rxc3 20.Qb2 Ra3

After winning the a2-pawn too, Botvinnik decided the game in his favour by pushing his passed a- and b-pawns.

Sometimes what happens is this. Your opponent fails to find the sole refutation of your novelty over-the-board, and he loses the game. The novelty comes in for scrutiny by plenty of strong players, and yet quite often the truth will be revealed by some zealous analyst who may be of modest strength in practical play.

A. Alekhine – M. Euwe

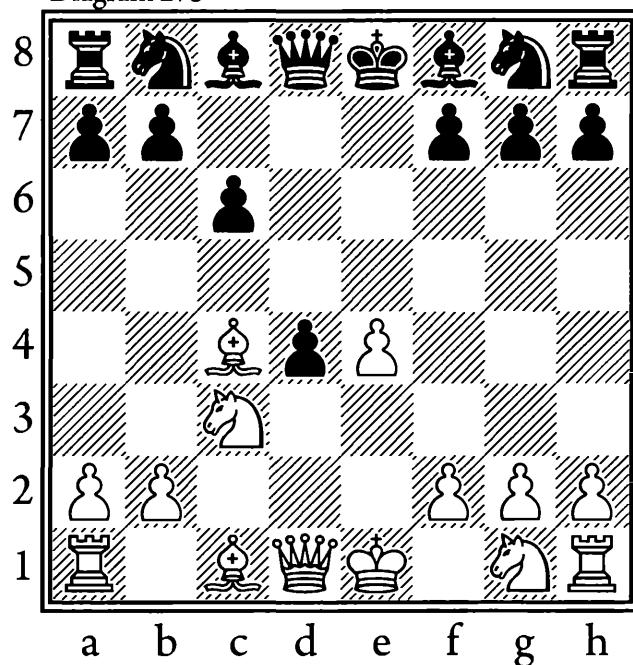
Haarlem (6) 1937

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 dxc4 4.e4

“It is almost incredible,” Alekhine writes, “that this wholly natural move should not have been examined by the so-called ‘theorists’.”

4...e5 5.Qxc4 exd4

Diagram 275



6.Nf3!?

An unexpected, stunning novelty – Alekhine all over! After a long think, Euwe decided that capturing the piece was dangerous, and anyway he could assume that this was just what Alekhine was expecting. Indeed, Alekhine later gave the line 6...dxc3 7.Qxf7† Qe7 8.Qb3 Nf6 9.e5 Ne4 10.0–0!, and either 10...Na6 or 10...Qb6 leaves White with a very strong attack.

But possibly the Dutch grandmaster felt that a move like 6.Nf3!? ought to be refuted somehow. The answer he eventually arrived at was:

6...b5?

Alekhine now has *two* pieces under attack.

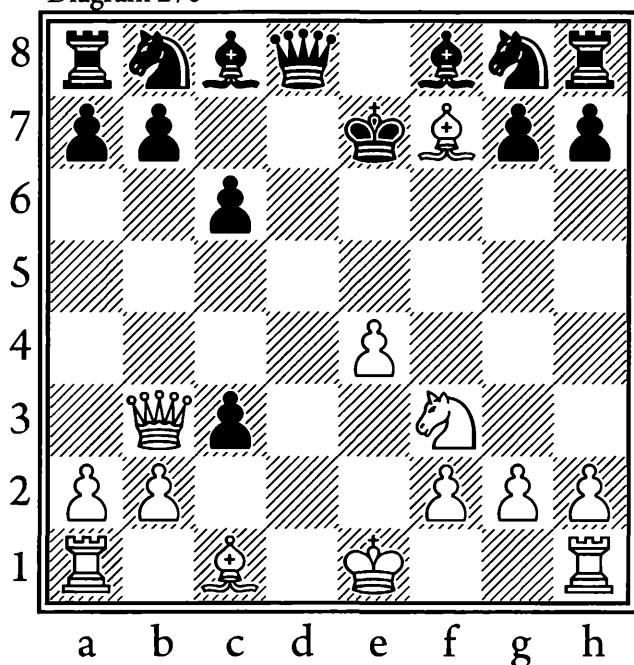
However, Euwe has overlooked his opponent's elementary retort, as often happens when a player is calculating some highly complex variations.

7. ♖xb5!

Now Black's position at once becomes hopeless, since 7...cxb5 fails to 8. ♕d5.

And yet, as was discovered by the Soviet player N. Goncharov – one of hundreds of amateurs who analysed this position – Alekhine's 6. ♖f3!? *could* be refuted. Black should take the knight, and after 6...dxc3 7. ♕xf7† ♔e7 8. ♖b3 ...

Diagram 276



... he should continue 8...cxb2!! 9. ♕xb2 ♖b6! 10. ♕xg8 ♖xg8 11. ♖xg8 (11. ♕a3† c5) 11...♖b4† 12. ♖d2 ♖xb2, with winning chances.

But then as Grandmaster Kotov aptly observed, there are *not* hundreds of analysts at the board to play the game, and only two and a half hours are allowed for a full forty moves.

Chapter 15

How Long does a Novelty Last

Where new and fully valid schemes, systems or variations are brought to light, they will be used for a very long time to come. But if the point of a novelty lies in some specific forcing lines, how many times can you use it with success? To put it another way, does a novelty continue to be a novelty once it has been used?

The answer may seem paradoxical: some of them do, others do not. What matters above all is not whether a novelty has been *used* before, but the quite different question as to how far it is *known* to have been used.

With the help of the press, radio and television, a novelty employed in a World Championship match will at once become the property of the entire chess world, since just about every move that the players make is scrutinized virtually under a microscope. Less is known about the novelties in the USSR Championship, although you can read about them in reviews and theoretical articles. What then is to be said about the dozens of other tournaments held either in this country or abroad? Yet the quantity of innovations in games from these tournaments is immense.

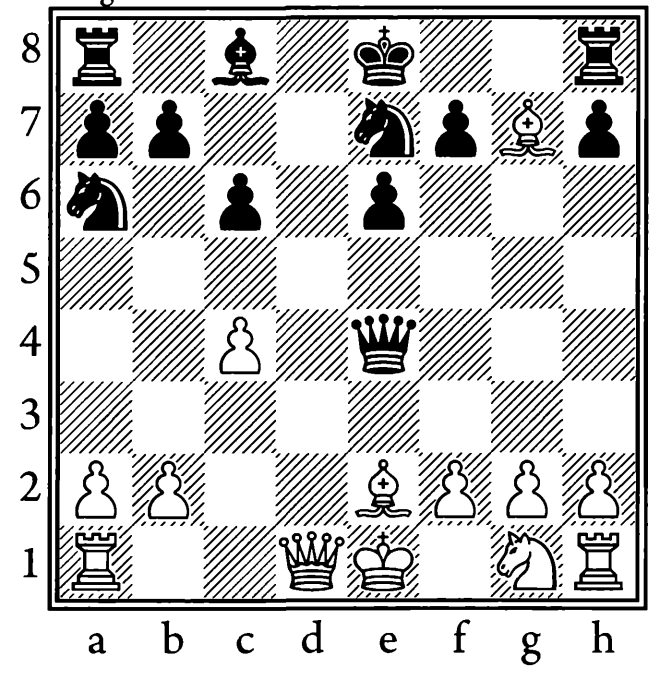
We know of quite a few cases where an innovation has already been made public but has still produced its effect because one of the opponents was unfamiliar with it.

D. Rovner – A. Kotov

USSR 1949

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 e6 4.e4 dxe4
5.♘xe4 ♙b4† 6.♙d2 ♚xd4 7.♙xb4
♚xe4† 8.♙e2 ♘a6 9.♙c3 ♘e7 10.♙xg7

Diagram 277



Kotov had gone into this variation willingly, and with his next move he captured the pawn on g2, attacking the white rook and bishop, and assenting to the continuation 11.♙xh8 ♚xh1.

10...♚xg2

To Kotov’s misfortune, however, Rovner was acquainted with an innovation of the Leningrad Candidate Master Eisenstadt which gives White a quick win.

A murderous blow ensued:

11.♔f6!!

Black is helpless, for instance 11...♖xh1 12.♖d6! 0–0 13.♖g3† ♕g6 14.♔f3!, and the queen is trapped. There actually followed:

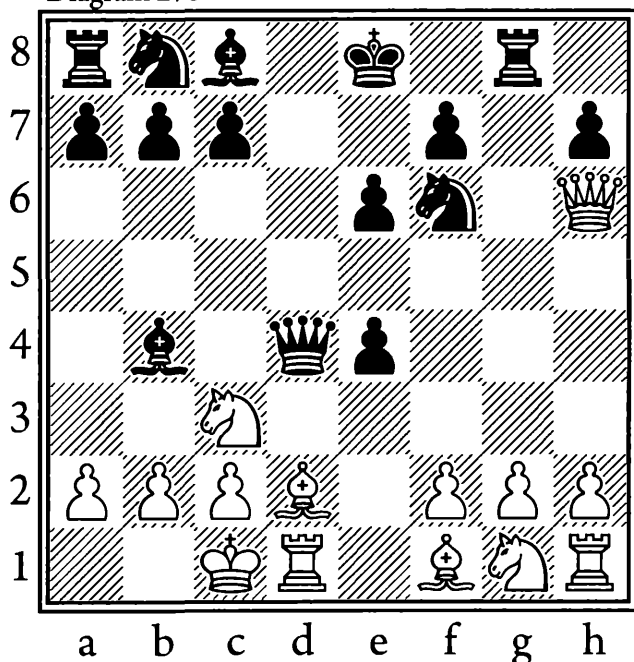
11...♘c5 12.♖d6 0–0 13.♔f3 ♖g6 14.♔xe7

White has won a piece and went on to win the game. In this game, then, Kotov fell victim to an opening novelty that was already known.

The match between Grandmasters Bronstein and Boleslavsky in 1950 for the right to dispute the World Championship title was exceedingly tense. The prescribed twelve games were completed, and the score stood at 6:6. According to the regulations, the match was to continue until the next win for either player. The 13th game ended in a draw.

At that same time, parallel with the match in Moscow, a national junior tournament was taking place. One of the games began **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♔d2 dxe4 5.♖g4 ♖xd4 6.0–0–0 ♘f6 7.♖xg7 ♖g8 8.♖h6**, giving a position which up until then had been rated in White’s favour...

Diagram 278



However, Black played **8...♔f8!**, confronting White with some serious tasks. Bronstein heard about this novelty before the 14th match game took place. He analysed the new continuation and decided to use it.

I. Boleslavsky – D. Bronstein

Moscow 1950

To Boleslavsky’s **1.e4**, Bronstein replied **1...e6**. Suspecting nothing, Boleslavsky was happy to select the continuation **2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♔d2**, especially since in the 12th game of the match he had gained the advantage after **4...c5 5.a3! ♔xc3 6.♔xc3 ♘f6 7.dxc5**. But Bronstein steered the game on a different course:

4...dxe4 5.♖g4 ♖xd4 6.0–0–0 ♘f6 7.♖xg7 ♖g8 8.♖h6

Thus, exactly the same position had come about as in the junior tournament. The “innovation” followed:

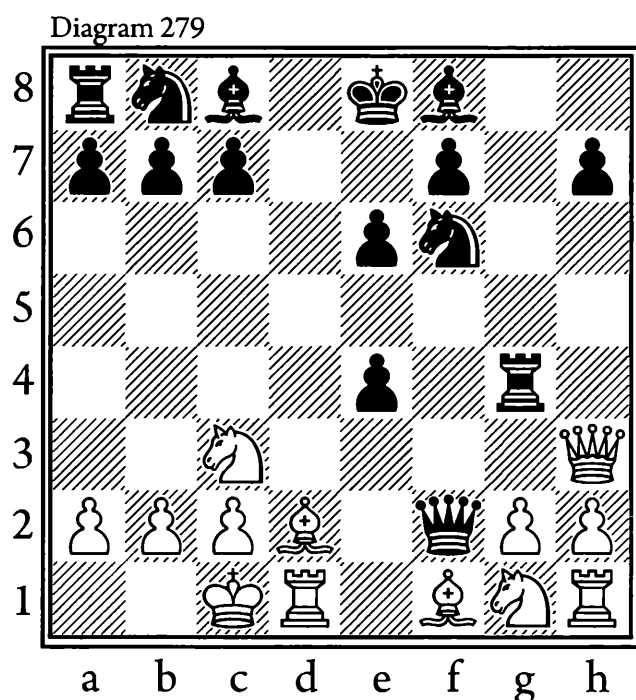
8...♔f8!

Previously in this position **8...♖g6 9.♖h4 ♖g4 10.♖h3** had been played, giving White a dangerous attack.

9.♖h4 ♖g4 10.♖h3 ♖xf2 11.♘b5 ♘a6 12.♘b1 ♔d7 13.♔e3 ♖f5 14.♘d4 ♖g6 15.♘b3 ♘b4

Black easily converted his material plus into a win.

The psychological impact of the novelty employed by Bronstein proved to be very great. This may have been what prevented Boleslavsky from finding the best continuation, pointed out later by the Candidate Master B. Batygin.



Instead of 11.♘b5 White should play 11.♙e2!, and if 11...♖h4 then 12.♙xh4! ♙xh4 13.g3! e3! 14.gxh4 exd2† 15.♙xd2 ♕h6† 16.♙e1. As to other replies, 11...♖xg2 is decisively met by 12.♙e3!, while 11...♖g6 12.g4 gives White an attack.

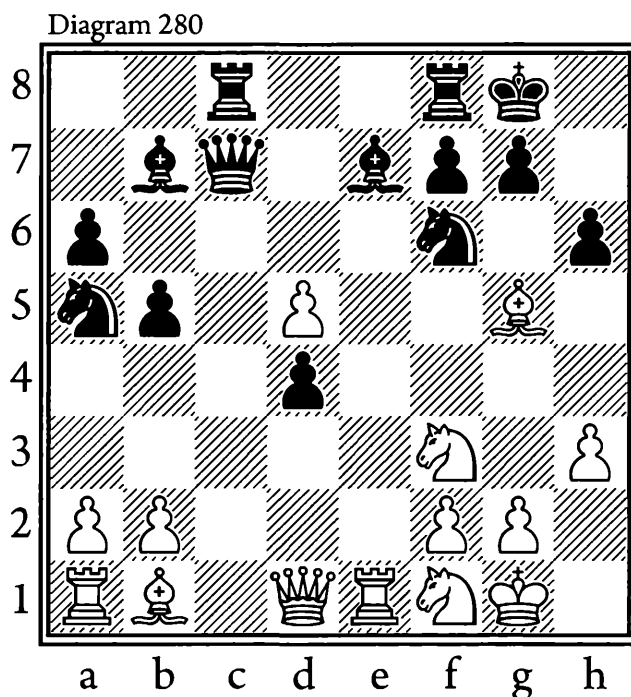
S. Gligorić – P. Keres

Helsinki 1952

Preparing for this game in the 10th Chess Olympiad, Paul Keres had decided to play the black side of the Panov Variation in the Ruy Lopez:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0–0 ♙e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 0–0 8.c3 d6 9.h3 ♘a5 10.♙c2 c5 11.d4 ♙c7 12.♘bd2 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♙b7

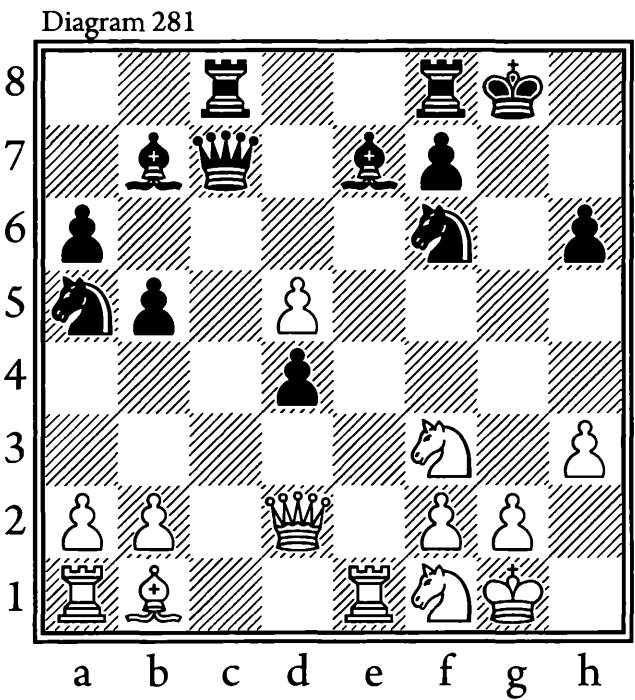
After the further moves 14.♘f1 ♖ac8 15.♙b1 d5 16.exd5 exd4 17.♙g5 h6, the following position could have arisen:



Keres was prepared to play this position, since it was from here that he had won with Black against Geller in the 19th USSR Championship (Moscow 1951): 18.♙h4 ♘xd5 19.♙d3 g6 20.♙g3 ♙d6 21.♙xd6 ♙xd6 22.♙d2 ♘f4 23.♙xa5 ♙xf3 24.gxf3 ♘xh3† 25.♙g2 ♘f4† 26.♙g1 ♙d5 27.♘g3 d3 28.♘e4 ♙f5 29.♙b4 ♖fe8 0–1

A few hours before the start of the round, Keres came across the latest issue of Euwe's *Archives*. As is well known, the Dutch grandmaster in his time published twelve volumes on the *Theory of Chess Openings*. To take account of subsequent theoretical findings, he issued supplements to this publication in the form of loose leaves which carried identifying numbers for convenience. These supplements were known as "Euwe's *Archives*".

On one of the pages of this issue, Keres saw an important innovation. It turned out that in answer to 17...h6 White could play an interesting piece sacrifice: 18.♙xh6! gxh6 19.♙d2



For instance, 19...♖fd8 20.♔xh6 ♜xd5 21.♞e4!
with a strong attack.

Timely acquaintance with this already known
innovation saved Keres from some highly un-
pleasant experiences at the board.

Chapter 16

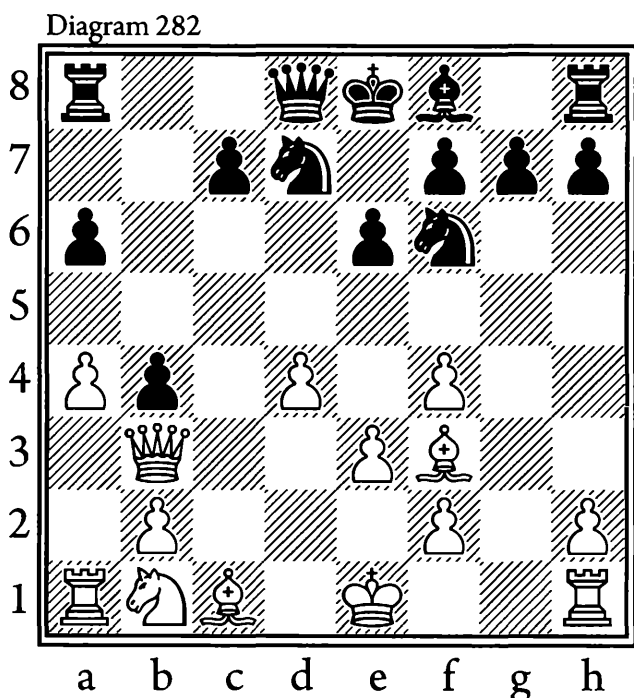
How is an Innovation Born?

In two World Championship match games against Botvinnik (Moscow 1954), Smyslov defended the following variation of the Queen's Gambit Accepted:

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 a6 4.e3 ♕g4 5.♕xc4 e6 6.♖b3 ♕xf3 7.gxf3 b5 8.♕e2 ♘d7 9.a4 b4

The 4th match game now continued 10.♘d2 ♘gf6 11.♘e4 c5 12.♘xf6† ♖xf6, etc. In the 10th game, Botvinnik improved White's play with:

10.f4! ♘gf6 11.♕f3



11...♖a7 12.♕c6!

With the aid of this manoeuvre White held up Black's c7-c5 for a long time and froze the entire black queenside. Smyslov refrained from using this line again in the match.

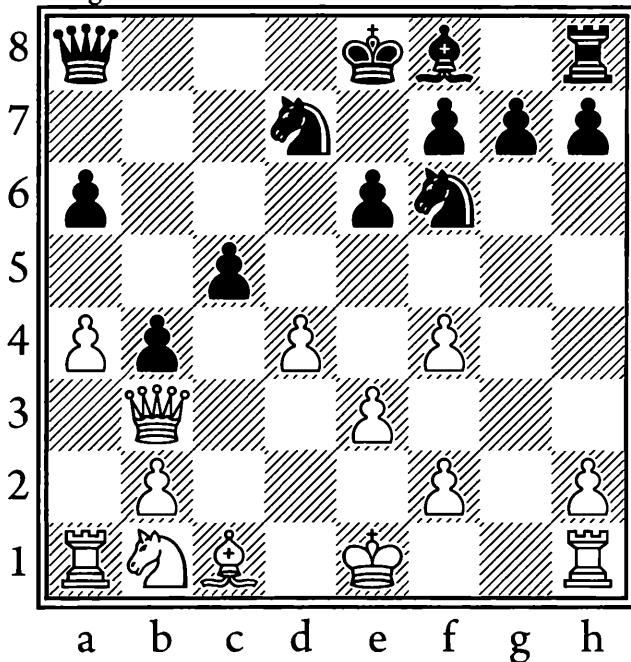
Indeed the whole variation began to figure in chess theory as difficult and unfavourable for Black. Yet there are many players who refuse to take even the most obvious thing on trust.

Instead of 11...♖a7, which led to a difficult position after 12.♕c6!, can Black's play be strengthened?

It is quite likely that when someone or other is examining the diagram position, an unexpected idea will come into his head: to play 11...c5!? at once, before the white bishop has had time to occupy c6. Naturally Black is sacrificing the exchange not just for the sake of advancing his c-pawn; he is also taking some other factors into account.

After 12.♕xa8 ♖xa8, an interesting critical position arises.

Diagram 283



White has no pieces out except his queen; furthermore his light squares are extremely weak, and he has a “bad” bishop on c1.

Since his rook on h1 is under attack, White obviously has to castle or move the rook to g1. In either case, definite counterplay arises for Black. Let's consider two new critical positions.

If 13.0–0, Black has various possibilities for attacking White's severely weakened king position – for instance 13...♖f3, 13...g5 or 13...♖g8.

The play takes a different direction after 13.♖g1. Black can choose the quiet positional continuation 13...cxd4 14.exd4 ♔d6, followed by castling. If 15.♖xg7, then 15...♖h1† etc. All White's pawns in the centre and on the king-side are vulnerable; his pieces remain badly coordinated and his light squares remain weak. Black has active piece play against his opponent's king and weak pawns.

A player discovering the idea of 11...c5!? would find an opportunity to apply it in practice or else send it “out into the world” in the form of a theoretical note. The sacrifice of the exchange presents an original problem in this line of the Queen's Gambit Accepted. Some players would prefer to play White in this position,

others would come down on Black's side.

The critical position after 11...c5!? would be analysed and tested in practice until a significant amount of material had accumulated and it became possible to issue some verdict on this new idea on the basis of the common efforts. For instance, “the exchange sacrifice permits White to obtain the better game by means of such-and-such variations.” Or – “Black acquires fine prospects in all lines.”

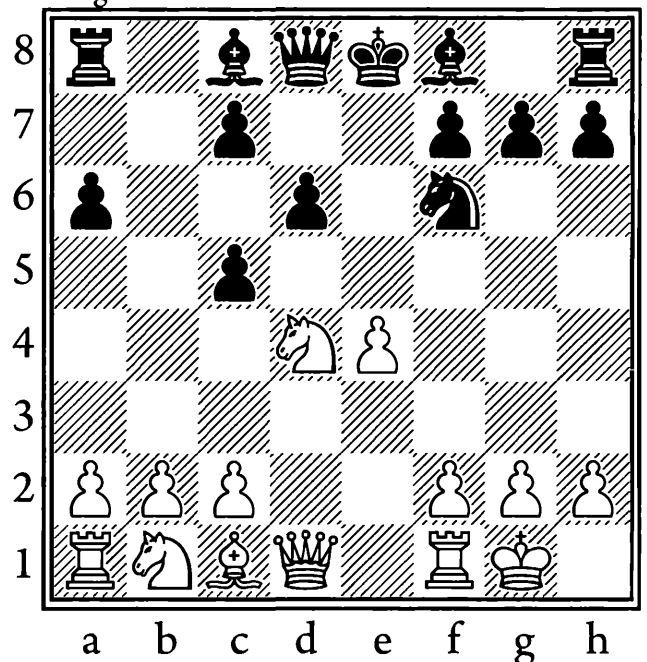
And now another example.

I. Lipnitsky – E. Poliak

Kiev 1955

In the Ruy Lopez, after 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0–0 d6 6.♙xc6† bxc6 7.d4 exd4 8.♘xd4 c5, a familiar theoretical position arises.

Diagram 284



White has usually retreated his knight to e2 or f3, for instance:

(a) 9.♘e2 ♙b7 10.♘g3 g6 11.♘c3 ♙g7, with a good game for Black (Suetin – Konstantinovsky, Moscow 1950).

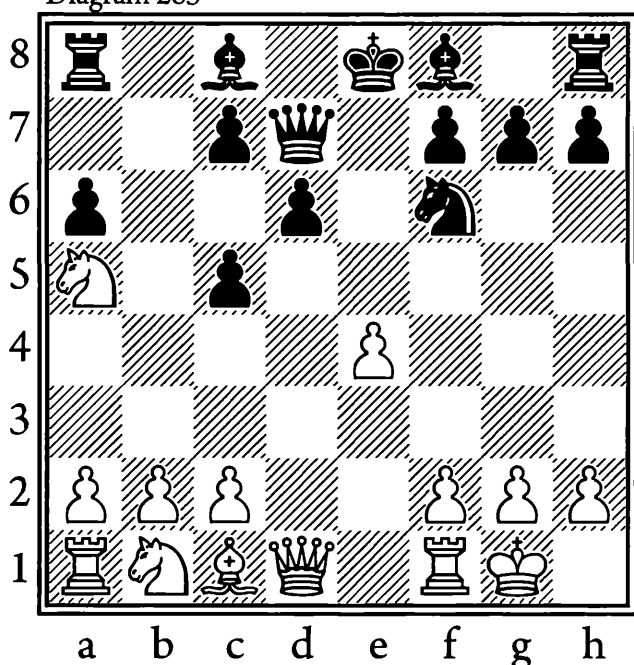
(b) 9.♘f3 ♕e7 10.♘c3 0–0 11.♖e1 ♖b7 12.♙g5 h6 13.♙h4 ♜e8 14.e5 dxe5 15.♞xe5 ♞xd1† 16.♞xd1 ♙d6 17.♞xe8† ♘xe8, with drawish simplifications (Smyslov – Botvinnik, 11th match game, Moscow 1954).

Both 9.♘e2 and 9.♘f3 are examined in theoretical manuals. However, in either case Black basically experiences no opening problems.

Is it really impossible for White to complicate Black's task? Instead of retreating the knight, what about executing the following active manoeuvre?

9.♘c6! ♞d7 10.♘a5!

Diagram 285



From a5 the knight blocks the black queenside and keeps the bishop away from its intended square b7. The other bishop is also difficult to fianchetto: on 10...g6 White has 11.e5!.

If Black develops quietly with 10...♙e7 11.♘c3 0–0 12.f4, he also faces distinct difficulties.

In the game, Black immediately attacked the knight on a5 with **10...♞b5**, but after **11.♙d2! ♙g4** (not 11...♞xb2 12.♘c3! ♞b6 13.♞b1 ♞xa5 14.♘d5 etc.) **12.f3 ♙e6 13.b3 ♙e7 14.a4 ♞d7 15.♘c3 0–0 16.f4**, White gained the advantage.

Without going into a detailed analysis of the manoeuvre ♘d4–c6–a5, we may say that it enables White to intensify the struggle and fight for the initiative. And both these things are most important.

A player will undoubtedly discover more than one novelty in the best established of theoretical variations, provided he avoids the various “stillborn” lines and persistently strives to gain the initiative, to raise the “temperature” of the opening struggle, to pursue new untrodden paths.

* * *

“In chess books and memoirs, just as in conversation, we constantly encounter phrases like ‘theoretically’, ‘such-and-such would be more in line with theory’, etc. In these cases the term *theoretical* is usually understood to mean moves that are widely acknowledged and repeatedly played, moves which I dare say have the advantage of being investigated more than others.

In actual fact, *in almost all openings it is possible to find moves that are no worse than the theoretical ones*, if a strong and experienced player is able to make them the starting point of a complete tactical undertaking. *Generally speaking, chess is far richer than you might suppose it to be on the basis of existing theory, which strives to squeeze it into certain narrow forms!*”

(Chigorin)

* * *

“Anyone who wishes to cultivate his capacity for independent chess thought must avoid everything in chess that is dead:

- artificial theories which rest on very few examples and an immense amount of contrivance;
- the habit of playing with weaker opponents and of shirking danger;

- the habit of uncritically copying and heedlessly repeating the variations and rules employed by others;
- self-satisfied vanity, reluctance to admit one's own mistakes...”

(Emanuel Lasker)

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Appendix

Selected Games of Isaac Lipnitsky

Some samples of Isaac Lipnitsky's play appear in the main, theoretical section of this book (see the "Index of Games and Part-Games"). In particular, his games with Smyslov (p.48), Keres (p.69), Taimanov (p.103), Bronstein (p.115) and Aronin (p.148) are worthy of special mention for the profundity of the play and the excellence of the analysis.

It should also be noted that some games and fragments of games which remained anonymous in the first edition of the book (1956) have been successfully identified as belonging to Lipnitsky. This applies to Lipnitsky – Kotlerman (p.52), Khalilbeyli – Lipnitsky (p.123), Lipnitsky – Sidorov (p.126) and Lipnitsky – Guskov (p.161). Unfortunately some other examples, which we have every reason to suppose are also taken from the author's own play, have remained unidentified and hence anonymous. This refers in particular to the games and fragments on pages 60-61 and 79-81, and in a few other places. We can only guess at the reasons why the author omitted the names of the players as well as the place and year.

The Appendix assembles twelve of Lipnitsky's games which he did not need for the discussion of his theoretical material, but which vividly and characteristically reveal the essence of his talent and practical strength. There are games from the 18th and 19th Soviet

Championship finals (Nos. 2-5 and 7) and USSR Team Championships (Nos. 8-11), and also creative achievements that earned brilliancy prizes (Nos. 1 and 6). The final game in the collection (No. 12) is unique: researchers of Lipnitsky's work as well as his friends and pupils believe this to be the last game he ever played in an official over-the-board contest.

Except where specially noted, all commentaries on the games are by Isaac Oskarovich Lipnitsky himself.

Game 1

M. Beylin – I. Lipnitsky

Dzintari 1950

1.d4 ♖f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.c4 d5 4.♙g5 h6

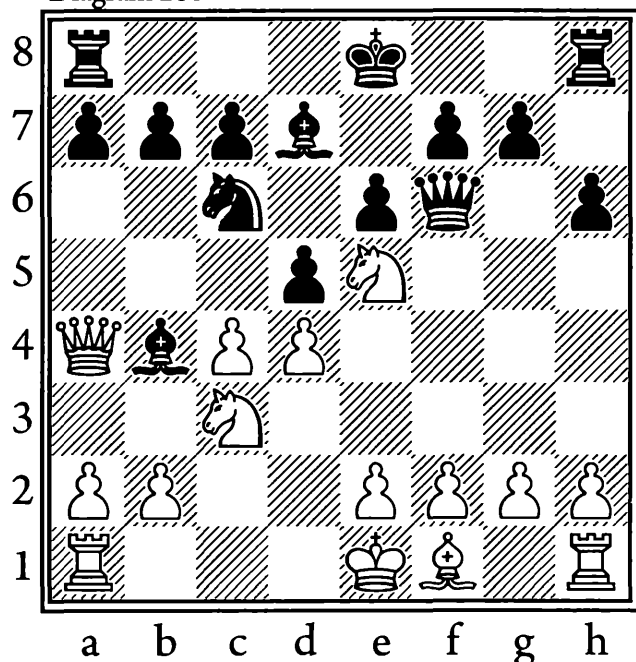
"After this move White obtains a lasting initiative."

"This is rightly considered unsatisfactory, since Black's two bishops don't fully compensate for White's advantage in space."

In the light of the latest findings from theory and practice, these pronouncements by Alekhine sound highly controversial today. A basic position of the Ragozin Defence now arises by transposition.

5. ♖xf6 ♜xf6 6. ♘c3 ♙b4 7. ♚a4† ♘c6
8. ♘e5 ♙d7

Diagram 286



9. ♘xc6

White notices the trap in time: 9. ♘xd7? would be answered not by 9... ♖xd7 but by 9... ♚xd4!. For instance, 10. ♚c2 ♚xc4 and Black comes out two pawns up.

9... ♙xc3† 10. bxc3 ♙xc6 11. ♚b3 dxc4
12. ♚xc4 0–0

While for Black the opening is already over, White still has considerable difficulties with his kingside development.

13. f3

The only way to complete the mobilization of his forces. After 13. e3 White would not be able to develop his light-squared bishop in view of the vulnerability of the g2-pawn.

13... e5

The obvious reply. Black tries to open some lines as quickly as possible, to give himself the chance of using his lead in development for a direct attack.

14. d5

14. e4 would give Black a little more trouble, as it would be harder for him to open lines. However, after 14... ♚g5! (there are other ways too) White's position remains difficult. If 15. d5, then 15... ♙d7 with c7-c6! to follow; White cannot continue 16. ♚xc7 on account of 16... ♚e3†.

14... ♙d7 15. ♚xc7

White cannot prevent the c-file from being opened anyway after 15. e4 c6!, so for now he compensates himself with a pawn. In attacking the bishop, he may have been thinking that he could still play e2-e4 next move. But it is a case of out of the frying pan into the fire. The result of the fight that White is starting with no reserves near at hand is basically a foregone conclusion, since all the brave exploits of his queen are insufficient to resist Black's splendidly mobilized army.

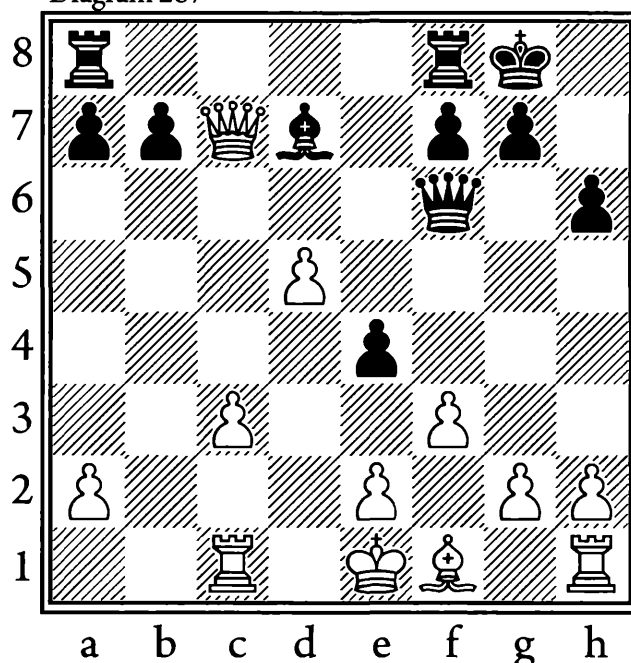
15... e4!

In positions of this sort, such moves tend to be readily available. Now White's dream of connecting his pawns into a single chain by e2-e4 can no longer be fulfilled.

16. ♖c1

Directed against 16... ♖ac8, but it proves inadequate.

Diagram 287



16...♖ac8!

The start of a combination leading to a win in nine more moves.

17.♔xd7 e3!!

Black's whole idea is based on this quiet move. The march of his pawn from e6 to e3 has enabled him to wall up the white kingside almost completely. In the first place the threat is ♔f6-d4!.

18.♔a4

White parries this threat and brings his queen to the defence. An amusing mating finish could take place after 18.♔xb7 ♖xc3 19.♔b2 ♖fc8 20.♖xc3 ♖xc3 21.g3 ♖b3!!, and White can resign.

18...♖xc3 19.♖d1 ♖fc8 20.g3 ♖c1 21.♙h3

In a difficult situation White sets a sly trap. The tempting 21...♔c3† 22.♙f1 ♔d2 is met by 23.♙xc8!! ♖xd1† 24.♙g2 ♔xe2† 25.♙h3 (the king follows the route paved by its officer) 25...♖xh1 26.♔e8† ♙h7 27.♙f5† and mate shortly follows.

21...♖xd1† 22.♔xd1 ♔c3†

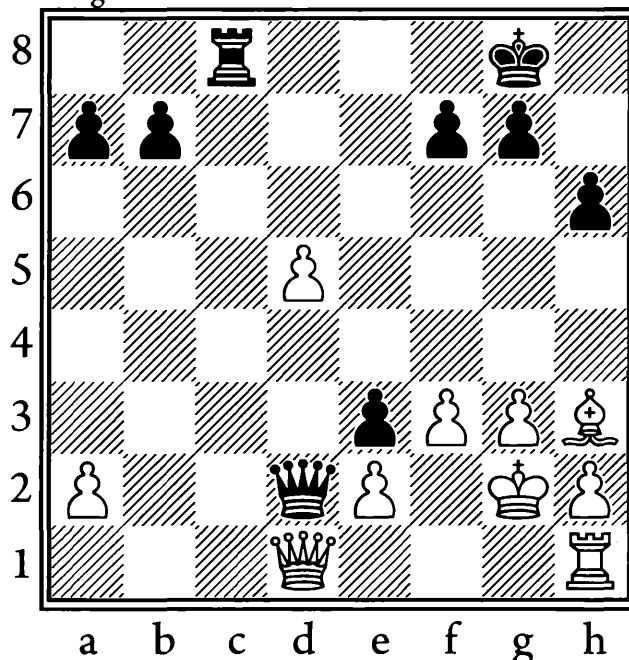
The c-file is the broad thoroughfare along which the black major pieces penetrate to the enemy's rear.

23.♙f1 ♔d2!

The sole path to victory. If the queens are exchanged, the e-pawn fulfils its mission to the end, turning into a new queen after 24.♔xd2 exd2 25.♙f2 ♖c1.

24.♙g2

Diagram 288



24...♖c1!

The culmination of Black's scheme. White resigned, not wishing to be mated in two moves by 25.♔xc1 ♔xe2† and 26...♔f2.

The game was awarded a special prize as the best in the tournament.

Game 2

I. Lipnitsky – A. Tolush

Moscow 1950

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5

Whereas in the Blumenfeld Gambit Black plays 4...b5 at once, here he exchanges on d5 first. However, after White's 6th move, a regular line of the Blumenfeld is reached.

5.cxd5 b5 6.♙g5!

In view of the threatened 6...♙b7, this is the only acceptable move; 6.♘c3 would be bad on account of 6...b4.

6...h6 7.♙xf6

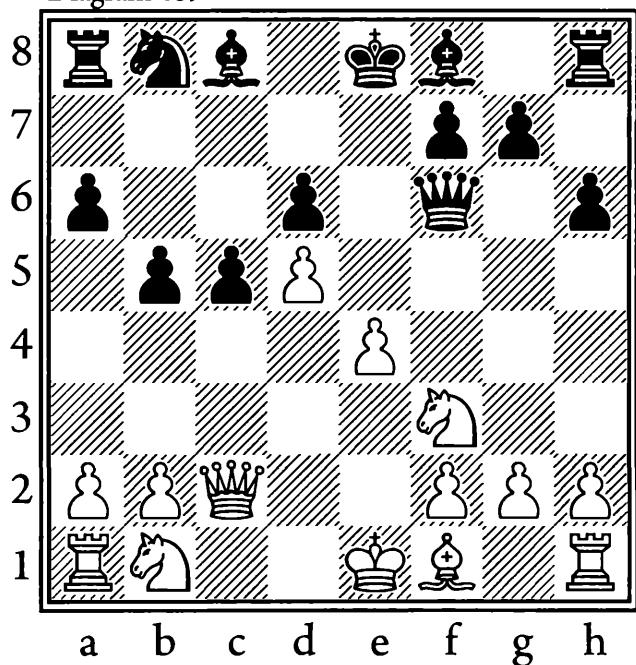
White could also play 7.♙h4, for example 7...♙b7 8. e4 g5 9.♙g3, tempting Black to

take the pawn on e4. In that case Black's best continuation would be 9...♞e7, since taking the pawn immediately with 9...♜xe4 would land him in a very awkward situation after 10.♞e2 ♞e7 11.♙e5 f6 12.♞xe4 fxe5 13.♙xb5.

By exchanging on f6 White commences a manoeuvre which leads by force to seizure of the important c4-square.

7...♞xf6 8.♞c2 d6 9.e4 a6

Diagram 289



10.a4 b4

Black is forced to advance the b-pawn, and c4 falls into White's hands; this is what constitutes his advantage.

11.♜fd2! ♙e7 12.♜c4 ♜d7 13.♜bd2 0-0 14.♙d3 a5

A dubious advance. The pawn is better placed on a6, where it covers b5 and is less exposed to attacks. The immediate 14...♜e5 was better.

15.0-0 ♜e5 16.♜xe5

On 16.f4, Black would have the choice between the calm 16...♜xc4 17.♜xc4 ♞d4† 18.♞h1 ♙a6 – with 19...♙xc4 to follow – and the more complicated 16...♜xd3 17.♞xd3 ♞g6.

16...dxe5

Now on 16...♞xe5 White could well play 17.f4 ♞d4† 18.♞h1, followed by ♜d2-f3. Possible variations are:

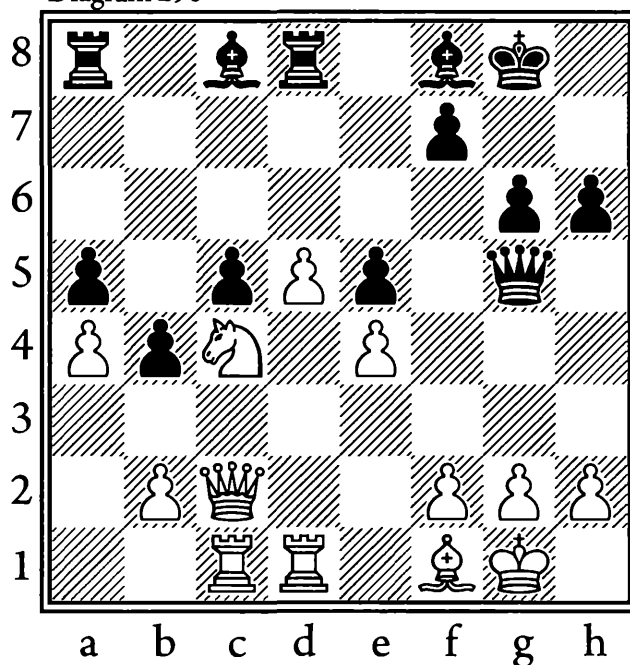
(a) 18...♙f6 19.♞ab1 ♙g4 20.♜b3 ♞e3 21.♞be1, winning the queen.

(b) 18...♙g4 19.h3 ♙h5 20.g4 ♙g6 21.f5, and Black will have to continue the struggle without the participation of his light-squared bishop.

17.♜c4 ♞d8 18.♞ac1 ♞g5 19.♞fd1 g6 20.♙f1 ♙f8

White has made all preparations for the push d5-d6, but refrains from it at the last moment.

Diagram 290



After 21.d6 Black's position would be quite difficult. An exchange of the passed d-pawn for the weak black c-pawn would leave White's major pieces very active on the central files.

Therefore 21.d6!, threatening either 22.♜b6 and 23.♞xc5, or 22.♞d5. There could follow:

(a) 21...♞b8 22.♜xa5 ♞xd6 23.♞xd6 ♙xd6 24.b3 with a big advantage.

(b) 21...♞a6 22.♞d5 (better than 22.d7 ♞xd7 23.♞xd7 ♙xd7 24.♜xe5 ♙xa4!) 22...♙xd6

23.♖cd1 ♕c7 24.♖xd8† ♕xd8 25.♜xe5 with numerous threats.

21.b3

By occupying this square with a pawn, White renounces the possibility of ♜c4-d2-b3 putting pressure on the pawns on a5 and c5.

21...♕a6 22.♜d2 ♕c8

Black clearly cannot allow an exchange of light-squared bishops.

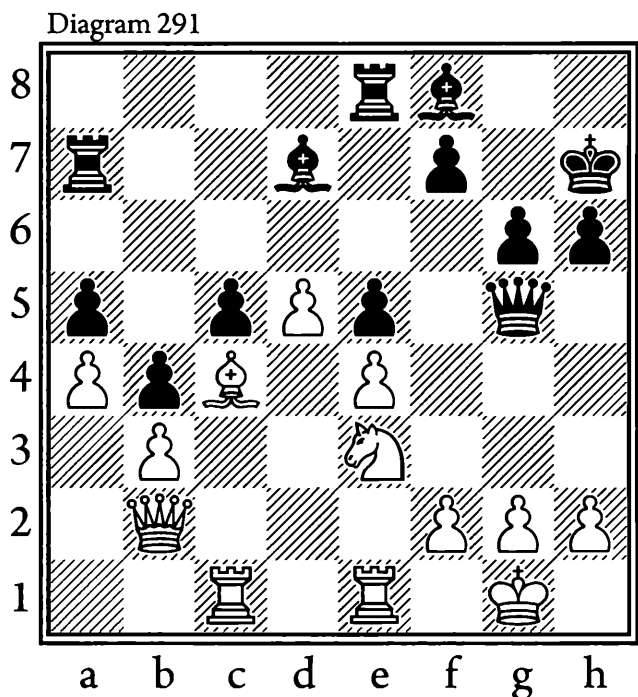
23.♚b2 ♕g4

24.♜f3 was threatened.

24.♖e1 ♖a7

He should have given his e-pawn a second defender with 24...♖e8, as White could now obtain the better ending by 25.h3 ♕xh3 26.♜f3 ♚f6 27.♚xe5 ♚xe5 28.♜xe5. However, more than once in this game White misses the strongest continuation.

25.♜c4 ♖e8 26.♜e3 ♕d7 27.♕c4 ♔h7



28.♚e2

It was imperative to seize the opportunity to exchange the light-squared bishops with

28.♕b5. After 28...♕xb5 29.axb5 ♖b7 30.♜c4 ♖xb5 31.♖a1, White, with his dominating knight on c4, would acquire substantial winning chances.

28...♖b8

Tolush of course averts the bishop exchange.

29.♖ed1 ♔g7 30.♚b2 ♔h7 31.♖f1 ♖b6 32.♕d3 ♖b8

After neglecting various opportunities, White has lost the thread of the correct plan; slipping into time trouble, he now switches to tactical complications.

33.h4 ♚xh4

Giving up his centre pawn, Black brings his dark-squared bishop to life. The retreat 33...♚f6 leads to the loss of a pawn after 34.f4 ♕g7 35.fxe5 ♚xe5 36.♚xe5 ♕xe5 37.♖xf7† ♔g8 38.♖f3 ♕d4 39.♔h2. On the other hand 33...♚e7 is good.

34.♚xe5 ♖e8 35.♚h2 ♚f6 36.♜c4 ♚d4 37.♕b1 ♕g4!

Forestalling 38.♖fd1 and threatening 38...♕e2.

38.♖fe1 h5 39.♜e3 ♕d7

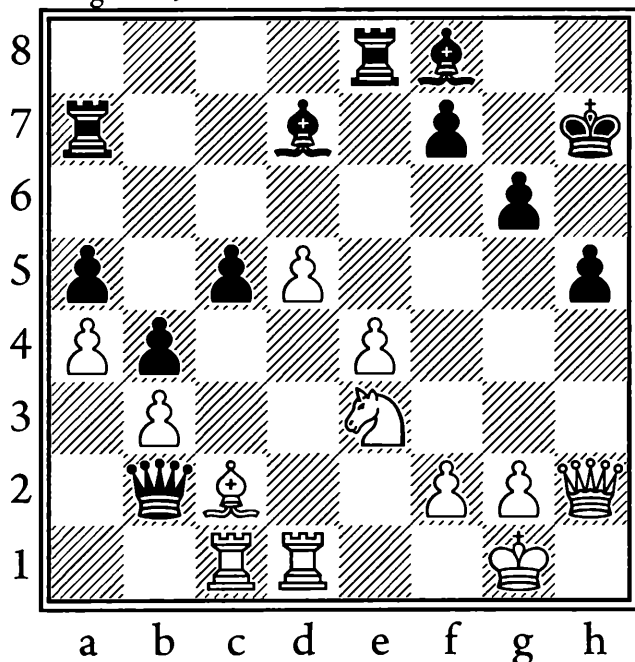
Probably 39...♕h6 was stronger, for instance 40.♜xg4 hxg4 41.♖ed1 ♚b2 etc.

40.♕c2 ♚b2 41.♖ed1

The sealed move. A considerably better one was 41.♜c4, leading to variations we examine in the note to 42...♚a2.

(See diagram next page)

Diagram 292



Grandmaster Alexander Tolush tells us:

“After lengthy adjournment analysis I came to the forlorn conclusion that Black’s position was lost if events took their normal course. The point is that White can take his time to prepare an advance of his centre pawns, while Black, with no possibility of creating any counterplay, is forced to await his fate meekly.

Therefore, analysing the position further, I started looking for ways to complicate the game – this was my only chance of salvation. Finally I discovered a way out!”

41...♔h6

“Against an immediate 41.f4 Black was similarly aiming to play 41...♔h6, and if 42.e5 then 42...♖xe5!” (Tolush)

42.♘c4 ♕a2!

In his adjournment analysis Tolush had convinced himself that after 42...♕f6 or 42...♕c3 White would gradually strengthen his position and should win in the end. For example:

(a) 42...♕f6 43.e5 ♕f4 (or 43...♕g5 44.♖f1! ♕f4 45.♖ce1 ♕xh2† 46.♔xh2 ♔g7 47.f4) 44.g3 ♕g4 (or 44...♕f3 45.♖b1 ♕c3 46.f4! threatening ♖d3) 45.♖b1 ♔g8 46.e6 fxe6 47.♘e5 ♕e2 48.♘d7 ♖xd7 49.♔xg6 and 50.♔xh5, with ♔g4 to follow.

(b) 42...♕c3 43.♖d3 ♕f6 (not 43...♔xc1 44.♖xc3 bxc3 45.e5! ♔g7 46.♕g3 ♔d2 47.e6 ♔xe6 48.dxe6 ♖xe6 49.♘xd2 cxd2 50.♕d3 etc.) 44.♖e1! with advantage.

Tolush therefore began looking for a continuation that could come as a surprise to White. He explains:

“Lipnitsky had evidently only reckoned with the queen’s retreat to c3 or f6, but in either of those cases White would gain a big advantage quite quickly.

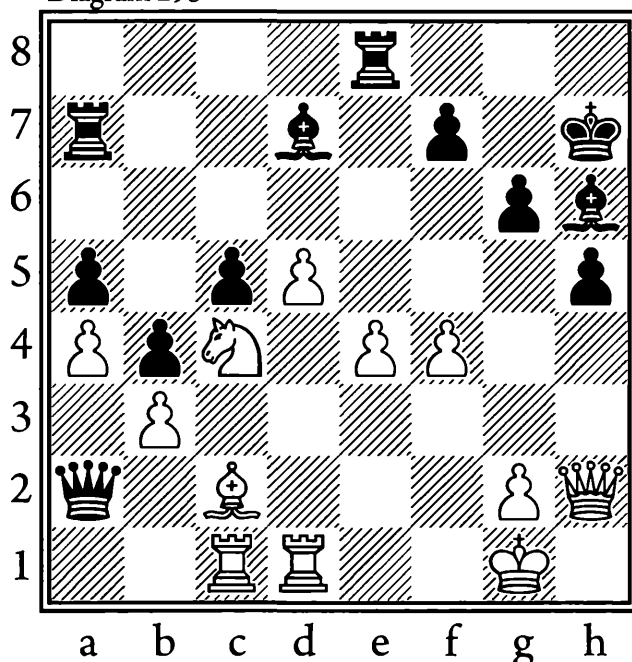
For example, 42...♕c3 43.♖d3 ♕f6 44.♖e1 followed by e4-e5 etc. In this line Black does not even have the opportunity to give up his queen for two rooks: 43...♔xc1 44.♖xc3 bxc3 45.e5! ♔g7 (the threat was 46.e6 and 47.♕xh5†) 46.♕g3!, and there is no defence against 47.e6, after which the black king’s position quickly collapses.

If Black plays 42...♕f6 at once, then after the simple 43.♖b1 he is again defenceless against White’s pawn onslaught in the centre.

The move Black actually plays looks like a gross error, since the queen is now left without a single move. In fact, though, 42...♕a2! is the start of an interesting combination.”

43.f4

Diagram 293



43...♙xa4! 44.♙b1 ♚xb3 45.♖d3 ♚xb1!

A brilliant practical chance. Giving up queen for rook, Black threatens to push his pawns on the queenside. A highly significant point is that once the bishop on b1 is destroyed, Black's rook breaks in with great force on the e-file and picks up another couple of pawns. The white queen on h2 is badly placed.

Obviously after 45...♚xd3 46.♙xd3 White would easily win.

46.♖xb1 ♙c2 47.♖bd1 ♙xd3

There was no hurry for Black to take the rook; he could continue with 47...a4, requiring White to play with extreme accuracy. The best reply would probably be 48.e5!, for instance 48...a3 49.♚g3 and now:

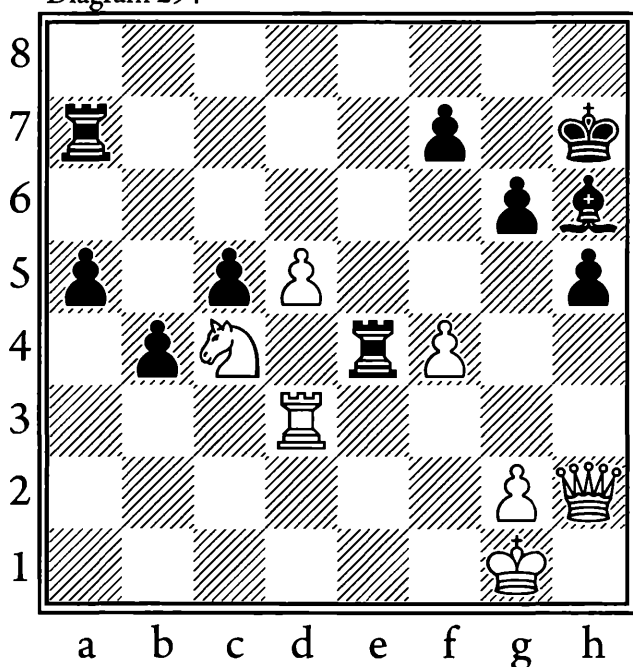
(a) 49...b3 50.♖xb3 ♙xd1 51.♖xa3

(b) 49...♙xf4 50.♚xf4 a2 51.♙d6

(c) 49...a2 50.♖a1 The black pawns come to a halt and White's material plus decides the game.

48.♖xd3 ♖xe4

Diagram 294



“Here is the ‘point’ of Black’s undertaking. He has only obtained a rook and three pawns for

his queen, which cannot of course be enough compensation in normal circumstances. But in this case the peculiarities of the position are such that White does not manage to utilize his material plus.

For one thing, the queen is most awkwardly placed. Secondly, the black queenside pawns are threatening to advance and become very dangerous. White should therefore hurry to advance his own d-pawn, but at the end of the day this only leads to a draw.” (Tolush)

49.♙d2

The immediate 49.d6 is also insufficient in view of 49...♙xf4 50.♚h3 ♖xc4!. White must then either take the draw with 51.♚c8 ♖d4! 52.♖xd4 cxd4 53.d7, or else assent to perpetual check by 51.d7 ♖c1† 52.♙f2 ♖c2† 53.♙f1 ♖c1† etc. In this last line, if he tries playing for a win with 53.♙f3 ♙g5 54.♚g3? (or 54.♚h2 ♖c3! etc.), this leads to the opposite result after 54...♖xd7!.

“If now 49.d6, then 49...♙xf4 50.♚h3 ♖xc4 51.d7 ♙g5 52. d8=♚ ♙xd8 53.♖xd8 ♖d4 54.♖b8 ♖d5! 55.♚c8 ♙h6 etc.” (Tolush)

49...♙xf4

Better than 49...c4 50.♙xe4 cxd3 51.♚g3! with winning chances.

50.♚h3 ♖e2 51.d6

51.♙c4 ♖e4 52.d6 ♖xc4 transposes to lines examined in the note to 49.♙d2.

51...♖xd2 52.d7

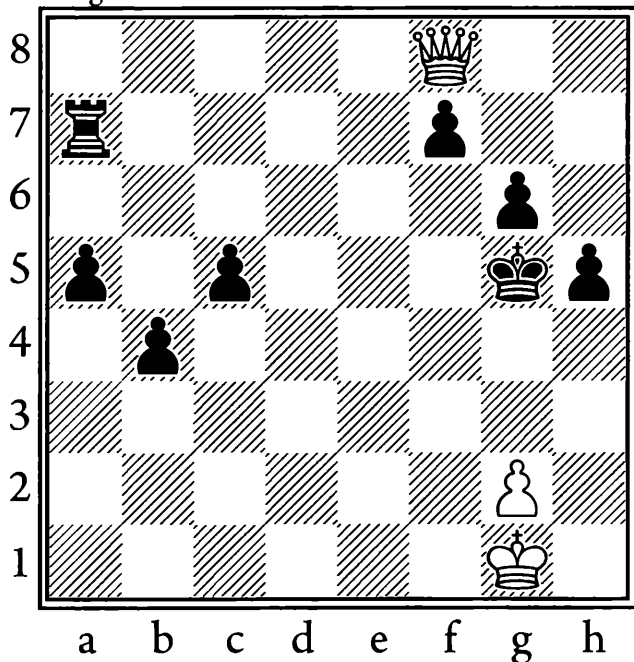
The triangle of white pieces (h3/d3/d7) is a curiosity. Now the pawn on d7 is going to cost Black a piece.

52...♖xd3

52...♖a8 loses to 53.♖xd2 ♙xd2 54.♚h4! g5 55.♚e4†.

53. ♖xd3 ♙g5 54. ♚d5 ♔h6 55. ♚xg5†
 ♔xg5 56. d8=♚† ♔h6 57. ♚h8† ♔g5
 58. ♚f8

Diagram 295



A rare type of position has come about: Black has a rook and five(!) pawns for the queen. And although White picks up all the queenside pawns with his following moves, this does not secure the win – Black has the possibility of a positional draw. The concluding moves were:

58... ♖d7 59. ♚xc5† ♔h6 60. ♚xa5 ♔h7
 61. ♚xb4 ♖d5 62. ♔f2 ♖f5† 63. ♔e3 ♔g8
 64. ♚b8† ♔g7 65. ♚c8 ♖e5†
 1/2–1/2

Game 3

A. Sokolsky – I. Lipnitsky

Moscow 1950

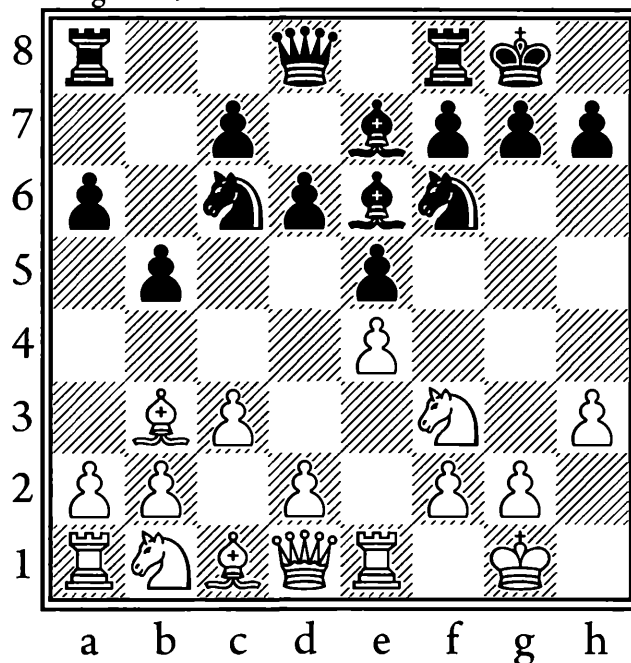
1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♙b5 a6 4. ♙a4 ♘f6
 5. 0–0 b5 6. ♙b3 d6

Black wanted to try out the sharp and intricate line arising from 7. ♘g5 d5 8. exd5 ♘d4 9. ♖e1 ♙c5 10. ♖xe5† ♔f8, but Sokolsky prefers the usual move:

7. c3 ♙e7 8. ♖e1 0–0 9. h3 ♙e6

This continuation was used by Chigorin against Schlechter as long ago as 1904.

Diagram 296



Black should not be afraid of his bishop being captured, since in that case he will securely defend the d5- and f5-squares with a pawn. The doubling of his pawns on the e-file cannot be exploited by his opponent, as was shown in the games Boleslavsky – Keres (match-tournament for the Absolute Championship of the USSR, Moscow/Leningrad 1941) and Boleslavsky – Botvinnik (Moscow 1947).

10. d4 ♙xb3 11. ♚xb3

This game was played in the final of the 28th USSR Championship. In his game with Konstantinopolsky in the same tournament, Averbakh took the bishop with his pawn. After 11. axb3 ♚d7 (stronger than 11... exd4 12. cxd4 d5 13. e5 ♘e4 14. ♘c3 f5, as occurred in Bonch-Osmolovsky – Yudovich, Moscow 1949) 12. ♘bd2 ♖fe8 13. d5 ♘d8 14. ♘f1 c6 15. dxc6 ♚xc6 16. ♘g3 ♘e6 17. b4 ♖ad8, Black does not stand badly.

11... ♚d7

Another continuation is 11... exd4 12. cxd4.

And now:

(a) 12...♖a5 13.♔c2 c5 14.♗c3 ♗c6 15.dxc5 dxc5 16.e5 ♗b4 17.♔e2 ♗fd5 At this point White can acquire a small plus with 18.e6! (as recommended by Keres and Bondarevsky), instead of 18.♖d1 as played in Bronstein – Furman (Moscow 1949).

(b) 12...d5 13.e5 ♗e4 14.♗c3 ♗xc3 15.♔xc3! ♔d7 16.♗d2 ♗d8 17.♗g5!, and White's pressure on the c-file is highly unpleasant (Boleslavsky – Flohr, Budapest 1950).

With the move played, Black avoids disclosing his plans for the time being; on d7 his queen is excellently placed.

12.♗bd2 exd4

The cause of subsequent troubles. Black should not hurry with this exchange; 12...♖fe8 was definitely more appropriate.

13.cxd4 ♖fe8 14.d5!

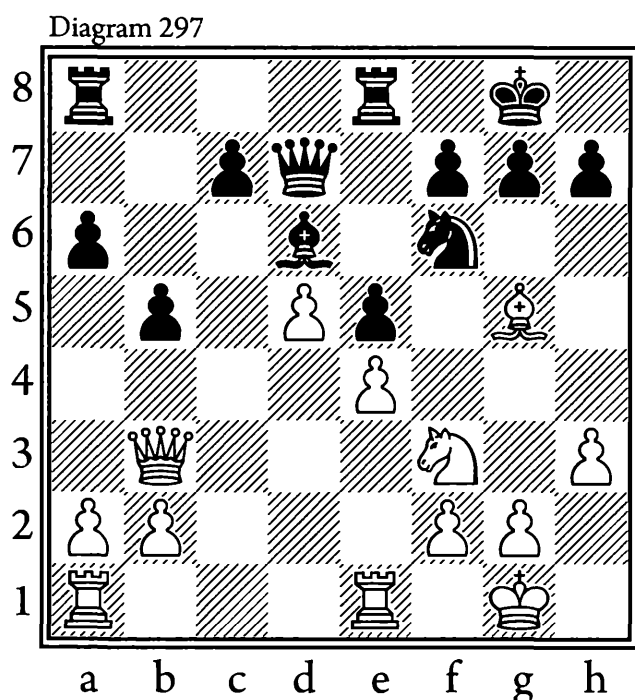
Securing White a clear advantage and giving Black plenty to worry about.

14...♗e5

Other knight moves (for example to d8) are hardly appealing in view of the simple 15.♗d4.

15.♗xe5 dxe5 16.♗f3 ♗d6 17.♗g5

This is the position for which White was aiming.



While the e-file is closed to Black's rook, and his bishop is merely supplying the missing link in the pawn chain e5-c7, the white queen's rook has rosy prospects in the c-file.

17...♗h5 18.♖ac1

Nevertheless this straightforward, inviting move is not the strongest and allows Black to create counterplay. At this point White had a pleasant choice between two continuations:

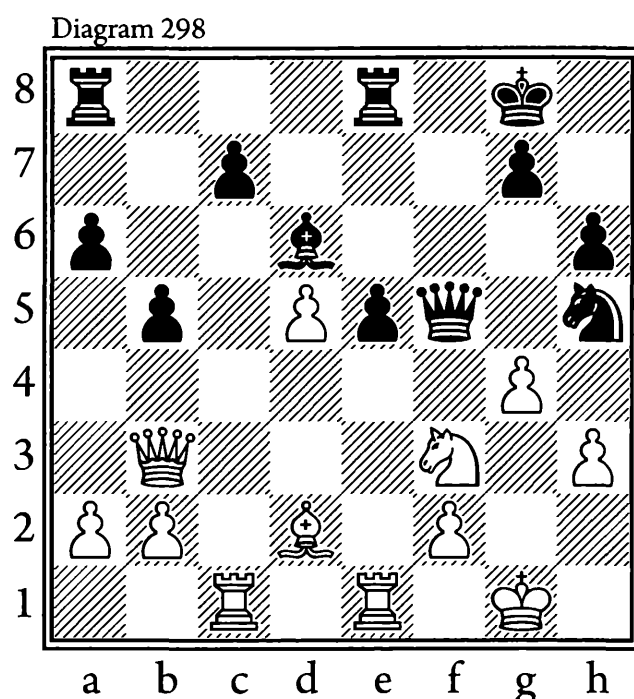
(a) After 18.g4 h6 (or 18...♗f4 19.♗xf4 exf4 20.e5 etc.) 19.♗d2 ♗f6 20.♖ac1 h5 21.g5 ♗h7 22.♗h4 Black would be in considerable difficulties. In this line, 19.gxh5 hxg5 20.♗xg5 ♗e7 21.♔g3! (but not 21.♗xf7? ♗f6!, and Black wins a piece) 21...♗xg5 22.♔xg5 ♔xh3 23.♖e3! is also good for White.

(b) Another strong move would be 18.♔c2, forestalling the pawn-breaks f7-f5 and c7-c6. But then White had no objection to f7-f5, imagining it would turn out badly for Black.

18...h6 19.♗d2 f5!

Launching counterplay on the kingside. It was no good postponing this counter-stroke, as White could prevent it with 20.♗h4, leaving Black condemned to a difficult defence.

20.exf5 ♔xf5 21.g4



21...♞f6!

A little surprise! White had only reckoned with 21...♞g6 22.♘h4 ♞f6 23.♘f5 ♘f4 24.♙xf4 exf4 25.♞e6! ♞xe6 26.dxe6, and Black is in a bad way.

Now, however, it turns out that the capture 22.gxh5 can be met by 22...e4, when Black regains the piece after 23.♘h2 ♙xh2† 24.♔xh2 ♞xf2† 25.♔h1 ♞xd2. True, the resulting position would contain some dangers, yet with his extra pawn Black would seem to have adequate counterplay in the ensuing sharp duel. An interesting variation goes: 26.♞g1 (with threats of 27.♞xc7 and 27.d6†) 26...♞f4 27.d6† ♔h8 28.♞xc7 ♞f3† 29.♞xf3 exf3 30.d7 ♞f8 31.♞xg7 f2 32.♞h7† ♔g8 33.♞g7† ♔h8 34.♞h7†, with a draw.

22.♞e4

This attempt to provoke 22...♘f4 does not succeed, and in some lines the rook on e4 itself becomes an object of attack. After this move the initiative passes to Black for good. A better move was 22.♞d3.

22...♞f8 23.gxh5

This leads to a difficult endgame, but recommending anything else is not easy. On 23.♔g2 Black would play 23...♞g6 with powerful threats, for example:

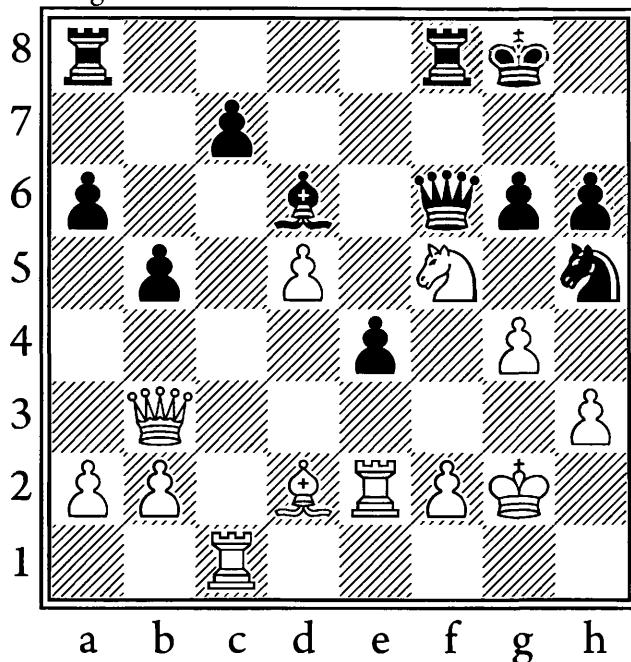
(a) 24.♞ce1 ♘f6, and now:

(a1) 25.♞xe5 ♘xg4! (but not 25...♙xe5 26.♘xe5 followed by 27.d6†), and White is in big trouble.

(a2) 25.♘xe5 ♞xe4†! 26.♞xe4 ♘xe4 27.♘f3 ♞xf3 28.♞xf3 ♘xd2 29.♞d3 ♘c4 with a technically uncomplicated win.

(b) 24.♞e2 e4 25.♘h4 ♞f6 26.♘f5 g6!

Diagram 299



And now:

(b1) 27.♘xd6 ♞f3†! winning the exchange, as 28.♔f1 fails to 28...♞h1 mate.

(b2) 27.♘h6† ♔h7, and there is no satisfactory defence against the threats of 28...♞f3† and 28...♘f4†.

(b3) 27.♞xe4 gxf5 28.♞e6 ♞d4!, and Black wins.

23...♞xf3 24.♞xf3 ♞xf3

It is hard for White to defend his weak pawns on the h-file and on d5. Black is threatening both 25...♞xh3 and 25...♞d3.

25.♞g4

Nor would 25.♙b4 have helped, in view of 25...♞d3! 26.♙xd6 cxd6 27.♞c7 ♞f8 28.♞g4 ♞f7 29.♞c6 ♞xd5 30.♞xa6 ♞d1† 31.♔g2 ♞d2 etc.

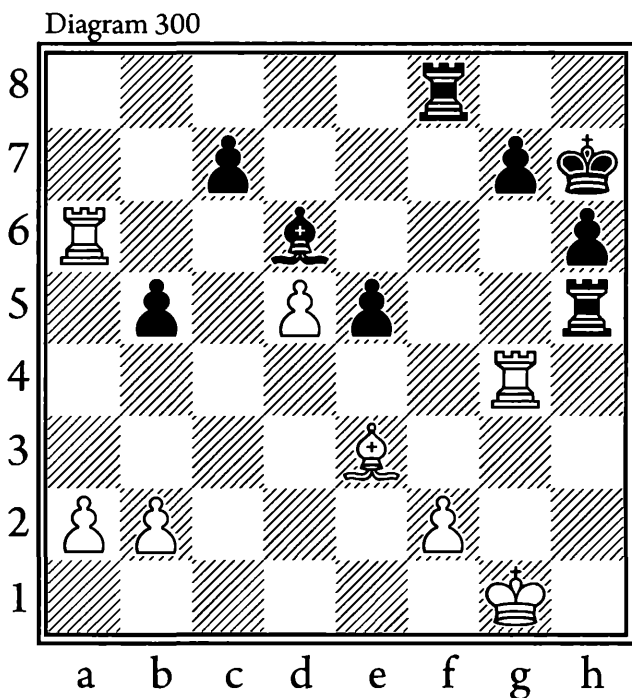
25...♔h7 26.♞c3 ♞af8 27.♙e3 ♞xh3 28.♞c6 ♞xh5

The passive 28...♞a8 is weaker on account of 29.♙c5! ♙xc5 30.♞xc5 ♞a7 31.♞c6 ♞xh5 32.♞cg6 ♞g5 33.♞4xg5 hxg5 34.♞xg5 etc.

29.♞xa6

So Black is a pawn up. His plan for playing to

win involves pushing his passed h-pawn. His immediate task is to activate his bishop and the rook on h5.



29...e4 30.♖xe4 ♜xd5 31.b3

Aiming to create a passed pawn with a2-a4, but Black easily prevents this. White should have played 31.a4 at once, trying to exchange the queenside pawns.

31...b4 32.♔g2 ♜ff5 33.♞c6

The threat was 33...♞a5.

33...h5 34.♞ec4!

Limiting the black rooks' freedom of manoeuvre, thanks to the threat of exchanging bishops by ♔e3-c5.

34...g5 35.♞e4 g4 36.♞ec4

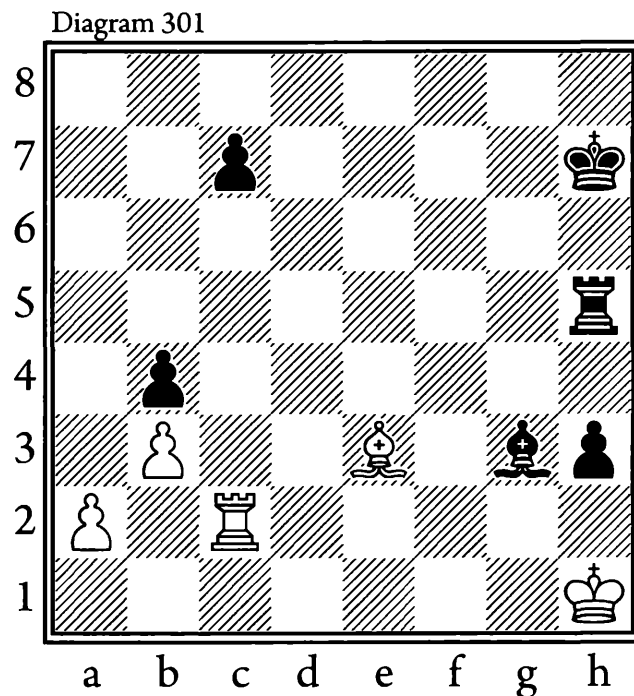
White has temporarily succeeded in halting the further advance of the h-pawn. Now how is Black to strengthen his position? He cannot play 36...♔g6 because of 37.♞xb4. On the other hand if he transfers one of his rooks to the g-file to support the g4-pawn, White will play ♔e3-c5 and the game will soon be drawn.

The following ploy achieves Black's purpose:

36...♞a5 37.♞c2 h4! 38.♞6c4 h3† 39.♔h1 g3 40.♞h4† ♞h5 41.♞xh5†

The sealed move. It is more stubborn than 41.fxg3 ♞xh4 42.gxh4 ♞d5 43.♞c1 ♞d3 44.♔f2 ♞c3 45.♞e1 ♞c2 etc.

41...♞xh5 42.fxg3 ♔xg3



43.♔c5!

The best chance! If White manages to exchange off the queenside pawns, he draws with no trouble. Black's difficulty in exploiting his advantage is the fact that his dark-squared bishop and h-pawn do not win the game if the rest of the material is exchanged.

43...♞d5 44.♞c1 ♞d2 45.♔xb4 ♞xa2 46.♞b1 ♔g6 47.♔c5 ♔e5

A small finesse. Black could not bring up his king immediately, as after 47...♔f5 48. b4 c6 49. b5 cxb5 50.♞xb5 ♞a1† White rescues himself with the discovered check 51.♔g1†.

48.b4 c6!

This move is Black's only way to win. Otherwise White would easily reach the haven of peace with b4-b5-b6. This is now impossible in view of the threat to the back rank:

49.b5 cxb5 50.♖xb5 ♖a1† etc.

Black's plan is very simple: to exchange rooks and win the bishop endgame.

49.♖d1 ♖f5 50.♙d6 ♖a1! 51.♖xa1 ♙xa1
52.♙c5

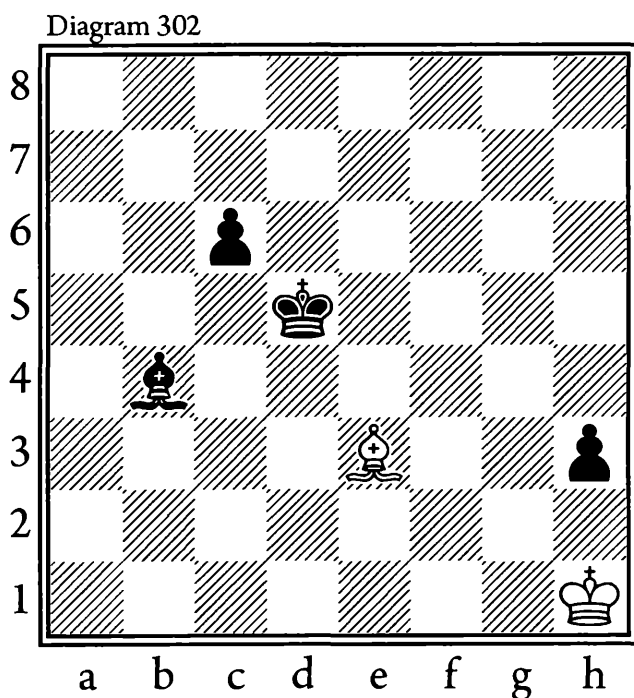
Obviously 52.♖h2 would lose at once to 52...♙e5† 53.♙xe5 ♖xe5 54.♖xh3 ♖d4 etc.

52...♙e5 53.♙f8 ♖e4 54.♙e7 ♖d5
55.♙h4 ♙d6 56.♙e1 ♖c4 57.♙d2 ♙xb4
58.♙f4 ♖d5

Averting the loss of the h-pawn, since 59.♖h2 would be met by 59...♙d6. However, Black needs the h-pawn only in order to keep the white king temporarily a long way away from the c-pawn.

Black would achieve nothing by 58...♖d3 59.♖h2 c5?, because of 60.♙d6! drawing.

59.♙e3



At this point the quickest way for Black to win is 59...♙c3 60.♖h2 ♙d4 61.♙g5 c5 62.♖xh3 c4 63.♖g2 ♖e4 64.♖f1 ♖d3 followed by ...♖c2-b3. In the game, he takes ten extra moves to carry out this same plan.

59...♙d6 60.♙f2 ♙e5 61.♙b6 ♙d6 62.♙f2

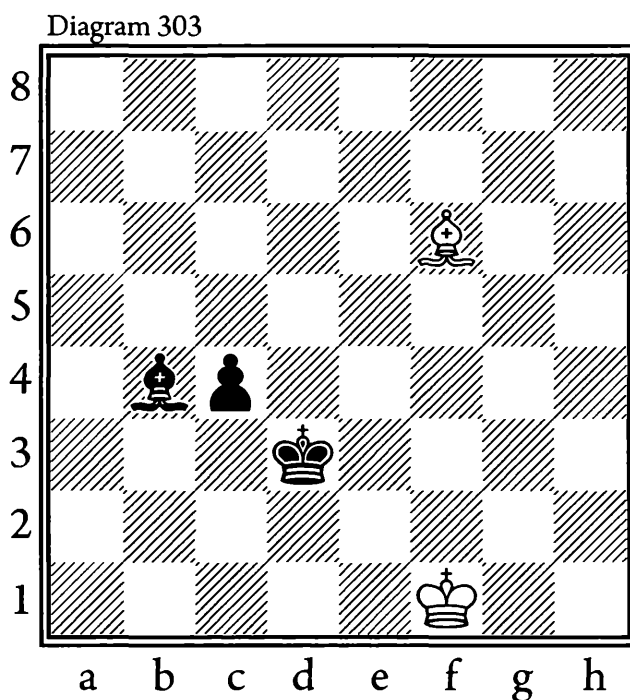
♙e5 63.♙b6 ♖c4 64.♙e3 ♙c7 65.♙f2
♖b5 66.♙e3 ♖c4

Needlessly turning away from the plan of 66...♙b6 followed by ...c6-c5-c4 and ...♖b5-a4-b3.

67.♙f2 ♖d3 68.♙c5 ♖e4 69.♙f2 ♖d5
70.♙e3 ♙e5

At last Black grasps that he won't succeed in advancing the c-pawn without giving up the h-pawn.

71.♙b6 ♙d4 72.♙a5 c5 73.♖h2 c4
74.♖xh3 ♖e4 75.♖g2 ♖d3 76.♖f1 ♙c3
77.♙d8 ♙b4 78.♙f6



78...♖c2!

The transfer of the king to b3 is quickly decisive, as White has no way of stopping the black bishop from reaching b2 – after which the pawn will advance to queen.

79.♖e2 ♖b3 80.♙e5 ♙a3 81.♙f6 ♙b2
82.♙g5 ♖c2

Having set up the winning formation, Black prevaricates instead of pushing the pawn at once.

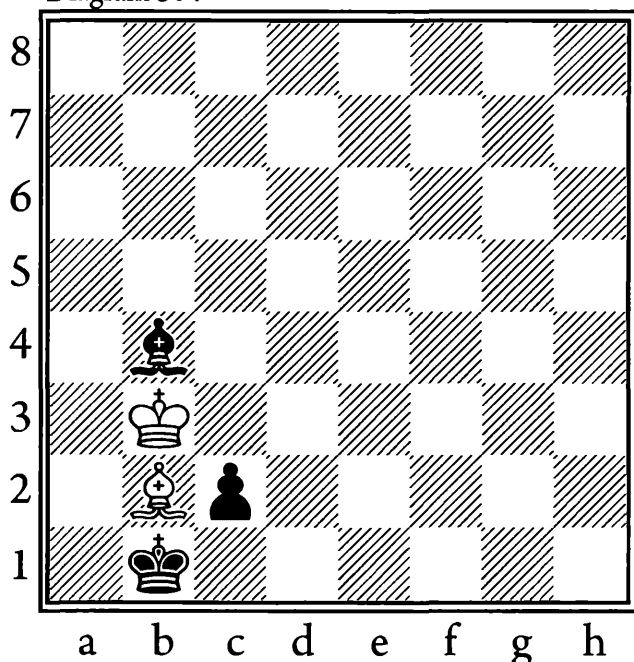
83.♙d2 ♖c3 84.♙g5 ♔b1 85.♔d1

The game was adjourned again, and Black sealed:

85...♔b2

At resumption, on seeing the sealed move, Sokolsky resigned without playing on. This was due to the following variation: 86.♙h6 ♔b3 87.♙g5 ♖b4 88.♙f6 ♖a3 89.♔e2 ♖b2 90.♙g5 c3 91.♔d3 c2 92.♙f4 ♖f6 93.♙c1 ♙g7 94.♙f4 ♔b2 95.♔c4 ♔b1 96.♔b3 ♖b2 97.♙g5 ♖c1 98.♙e7 ♙f4 99.♙a3 ♙d6! 100.♖b2 ♖b4!, and the pawn promotes.

Diagram 304



Game 4

I. Lipnitsky – E. Geller

Moscow 1950

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♖c3 ♙g7 4.e4 0–0
5.♙e3 d6 6.h3 e5 7.d5

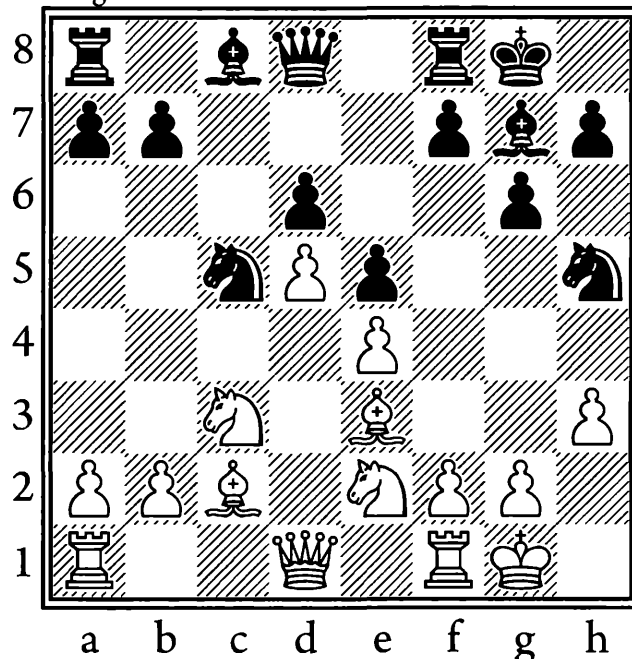
In answer to the white pawn crossing the half-way line, Black brings about an exchange that opens the c-file for him.

7...c6 8.♙d3 ♖a6 9.♖ge2 cxd5 10.cxd5

10..♖c5 11.♙c2 ♖h5 12.0–0

A more precise move was probably 12.♙d2, preventing a sortie to h4 by the black queen (in view of 13.♙g5) and also h7-h6.

Diagram 305



12...h6

White's plan envisages the complete mobilization of his forces followed by taking the initiative on the queenside, where he has an advantage in space. In such positions Black frequently works up counterplay on the kingside with f7-f5, but in this particular situation that pawn advance would tend to favour White: 12...f5 13.exf5 gxf5 14.f4!

Taking this into account, Geller refrains from f7-f5 for the moment; instead he manoeuvres on both flanks. With his last move he prepares to bring his queen out to h4.

13.♙c1

The rook will later have to return to a1, and the text move will prove to have been a waste of time. Again 13.♙d2 was better.

It was also worth considering 13.b4. We should note that by way of preventing this move, Black has had a7-a5 available for some time.

13...a5 14.♔h2 ♕d7 15.a4

It is essential to prevent b7-b5.

15...♔h7

Forced sooner or later. After this move, the advance f7-f5 is scarcely attractive thanks to the white bishop on c2.

16.♕d2 ♖c8 17.♖a1

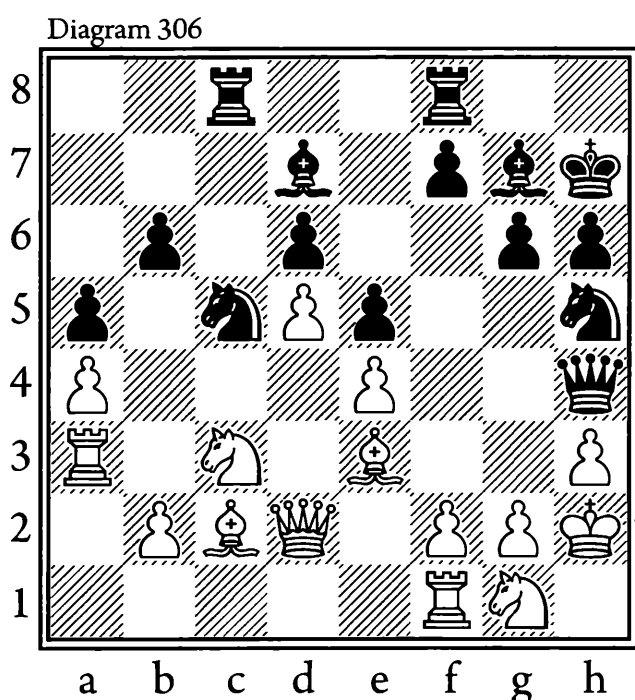
White has two pieces tied to the defence of his a4-pawn. By returning his rook to a1 he not only over-protects this pawn but also prepares to bring the rook into the action via the third rank.

17...♕h4 18.♖a3

A useful move. Up to now both sides have been strengthening their positions without undertaking any resolute action, but soon the first clash will inevitably occur, and then the placing of the rook on a3 will prove very much to the point.

Incidentally this move stops the knight on c5 from forking on b3, which would be possible in some lines.

18...b6 19.♘g1



White wants to drive the black queen away

with g2-g3, and to do this he must defend h3. In addition, by freeing the e2-square, he is thinking of playing ♕c2-d1-e2-b5 to exchange the light-squared bishops. This would enable him to begin gradually conquering the key points on the queenside and attacking the pawns on b6 and d6.

The position is most instructive: while Black has been having difficulty forming a convenient plan that would not involve f7-f5, White's play on the queenside is clear. It does not suit Geller's temperament to wait patiently while his opponent gets on with his plans, so he resorts to the move f7-f5 from which he has been refraining for so long.

19...f5 20.g3

If White exchanged on f5 and only then played 21.g3, the black queen could move away to b4.

20...♕e7 21.exf5 ♕xf5

White would meet 21...gxf5 with 22.♘ge2 followed by f2-f4 or g2-g4.

22.♘ge2 ♕xc2

Black need not have hurried to make this exchange, as it only helps White to gain control of the light squares. For the moment there was no threat of 23.♕xf5 gxf5 24.f4, since Black could reply 24...exf4, and if 25.♘xf4 then 25...♕xc3! followed by bringing the knight to e4.

23.♕xc2 ♘f6

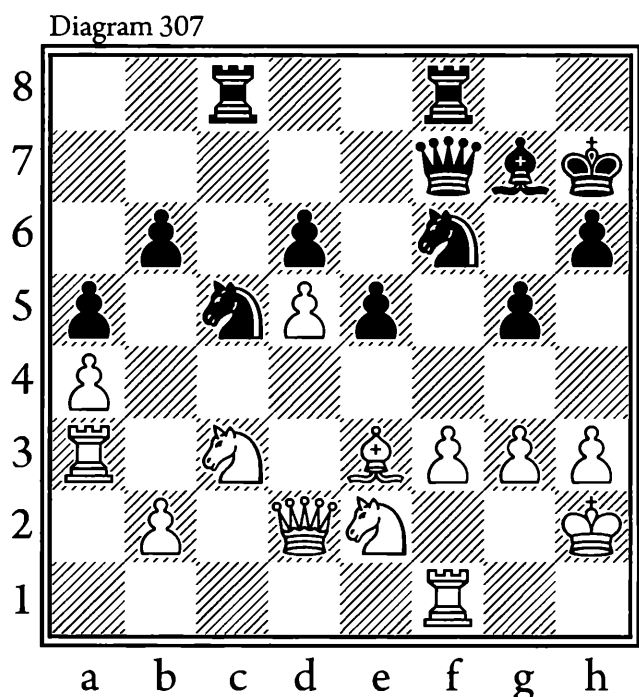
It was here that Black should have tried to exploit the weakness of d3 and f3 by playing 23...e4, since with his next move White takes measures against that thrust.

24.f3 ♕f7

Black diverts the white queen from the b1-h7 diagonal.

Once again, some highly intricate play would result from 24...e4 25.f4 ♖d3. It should be noted that Black was already in time trouble.

25.♔d2 g5



26.g4!

An important juncture. White manages to seize the e4-square, which opens up the prospect of later reaching a favourable endgame with a knight on e4 versus the bishop on g7. If now 26...e4, White continues 27.f4! with a splendid game – for instance 27...h5 28.♖g3 hxc4 29.fxc4 etc.

26...♖g8

Black is transferring this knight to g6.

27.♖g3 ♖e7 28.♔xc5 bxc5

Of course not 28...♔xc5 on account of 29.♖ge4 and 30.♖xd6.

29.♖ge4 ♔b8

Black is not afraid of the knight capturing on d6, when he has 29...♔f4† 31.♔xf4 ♔xb2† and 32...exf4.

30.♔f2 ♔fd8 31.♔a1 ♔f4† 32.♔xf4

In view of Black's potential manoeuvre ♖e7-g6-h4, White cannot avoid this capture which opens the diagonal of the black bishop. On 32.♔g1, there could follow 32...♖g6! 33.♖b5 ♖h4 34.♔xf4 (34.♔af1 ♖xf3† and 35...♔xe4) 34...exf4. Then 35.♖exd6 would fail to 35...♔xd6! 36.♖xd6 ♔d4! with threats of 37...♔xb2, 37...♖xf3† and 37...♔d8.

32...exf4 33.♔e1 ♖g6 34.♖b5 ♖e5 35.♔d1 ♔b6 36.b3 ♖g6 37.♔g2

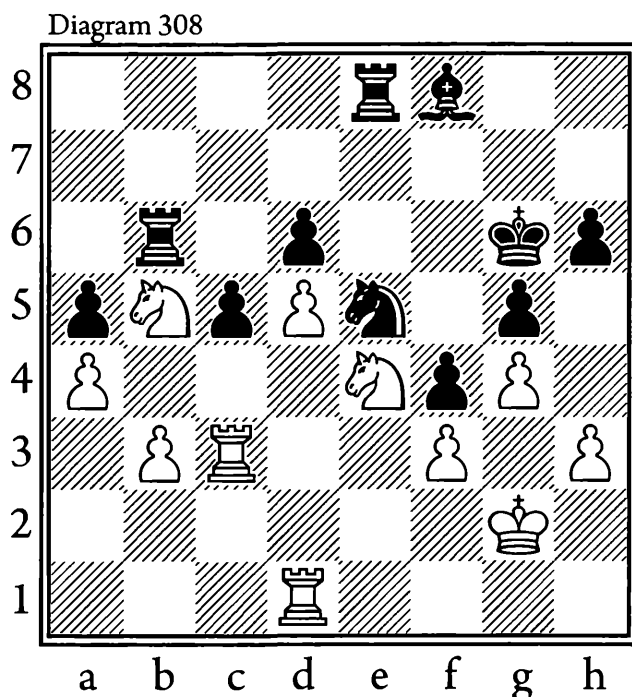
White cannot now prevent 37...c4, since 37.♖d2 is unpleasantly answered by 37...♔e8 threatening 38...♖d3.

37...♔f8

In acute time trouble Geller probably could not work out all the variations following the sharp 37...c4.

38.♔c2 ♔g7 39.♔f2 ♔f8 40.♔g2 ♔e8 41.♔c3

The sealed move.



An advantage for White has taken shape, based on the weakness of Black's pawns on a5 and d6, and also the "bad" black bishop. If two rooks and a knight could be removed from each player's army, Black would have a

completely lost endgame. In many variations a march by the white king from d3, along one of the routes d3-c4-b5 or d3-e4-f5, would be decisive.

41...♖f7 42.♗d2

If Black were now to sacrifice the exchange on e4, so as to fortify himself by bringing the bishop to e5, White would win after carrying out a kingside breakthrough with h3-h4.

42...♗e5 43.♗e2 ♖f7

Black is extremely restricted in his manoeuvres. He not only has to look after his pawn on d6, he also needs to guard against a potential sacrifice on that square followed by a capture on e5 (should the black rook have moved away from e8). He must also prevent ♗e4-d2-c4!.

44.♗cc2 ♗g7

Alas, 44...♗e5 is not now playable, as White would reply 45.♗d2 ♗bb8 46.♗c4! ♗xc4 47.bxc4 with a won position.

45.♔f1 ♗e5

Black is unable to avoid a rook exchange after the knight on e4 moves away.

46.♗ec3 ♗xe2 47.♗xe2 ♗b7 48.♗c1 ♗e7 49.♗e2 ♗e5

Of course another rook exchange would only hasten Black's defeat. But then the game was no longer to be saved anyway.

50.♗e4

Clearly 50.♗xd6 would allow Black counterplay after 50...♗d7.

50...♗d7 51.♔e2 ♗f6 52.♗d3 h5 53.♗xe5† ♗xe5

There was little consolation in 53...dxe5 54.d6 either.

54.♔d3 hxg4 55.hxg4 ♗e7

Black cannot make use of the h-file. On 55...♗h7 White has 56.♗xd6 ♗xd6 57.♗e6† etc.

56.♗e2 ♗d7 57.♗h2

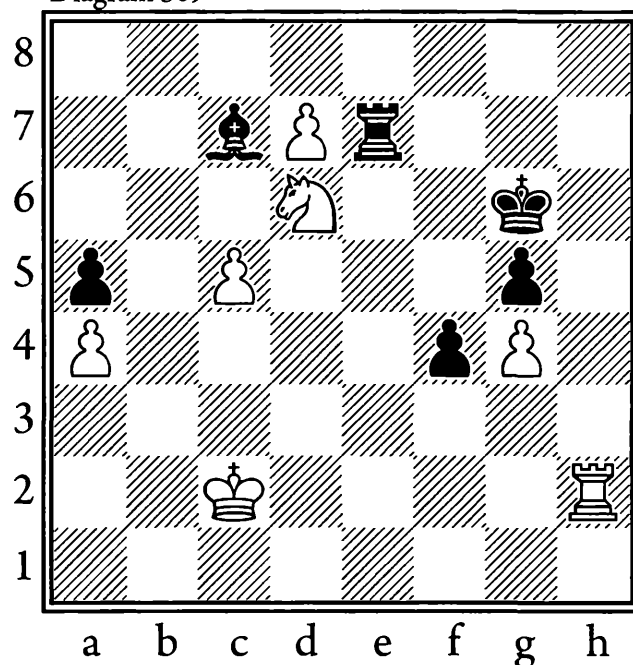
As White wants to transfer his knight to c4, he now needs to stop the black rook from seizing the h-file.

57...♗b7 58.♔c2 ♗e7 59.♗a3 ♗d4

A final attempt to acquire *some* counterplay for Black.

60.♗c4 ♗e1 61.♗xd6 ♗e3 62.♗e4 ♗xf3 63.d6 c4 64.bxc4 ♗e3 65.d7 ♗b6 66.c5 ♗c7 67.♗d6 ♗e7

Diagram 309



68.♗h6†! ♔xh6 69.♗f5† ♔g6 70.♗xe7† ♔f7 71.♗c6

1-0

Game 5

I. Lipnitsky – T. Petrosian

Moscow 1950

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 ♗e7 5.g3

In this situation, fianchettoing the light-squared bishop is most appropriate.

5...♘c6

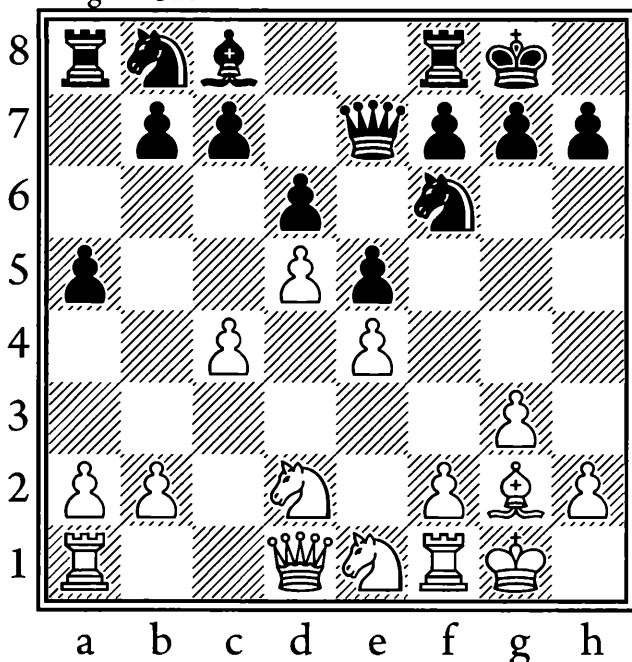
This knight will later return to b8 with loss of tempo. But if Black tries to develop it on d7 after 5...♙xd2† 6.♙xd2 d6, White acquires a small plus with 7.♘c3.

6.♙g2 ♙xd2† 7.♘bxd2

Capturing with 7.♙xd2 would bring White various discomforts after 7...♘e4 – for instance 8.♙c2 ♙b4†, and to avoid losing a pawn White would have to accept doubled c-pawns after 9.♘c3 or else renounce castling with 9.♙f1.

7...d6 8.e4 e5 9.d5 ♘b8 10.0–0 a5 11.♘e1 0–0

Diagram 310



12.f4

In continuing this way, it was essential to reckon with the possible retort 12...exf4 13.gxf4 ♘g4, threatening ♘g4-e3, f7-f5 or ♙e7-f6. The best answer would be 14.♙e2!, and if 14...f5 then 15.h3 and 16.e5; or if 14...♙f6, then 15.e5 dxe5 16.h3 etc.

12...♘a6 13.f5

A second white pawn has crossed the half-way line, yet Black has no particular grounds for worrying about the fate of his king: the absence of weaknesses in his position means he can count on the success of his defensive measures.

13...♘d7 14.♙h5

It was also worth considering 14.g4 followed by ♘f3, h4 and g5.

14...♘ac5 15.g4 ♘f6

The queen is driven back to h3, and White's pawn storm is temporarily halted.

16.♙h3

Of course not 16.♙h4? ♘xd5.

16...h6

White was threatening g4-g5 and then f5-f6.

17.♙c1

Attacking on the kingside proves to be anything but simple. One of the difficulties is the impossibility of using the white knights, owing to the weak points d3 and e4. The best move would have been the immediate 17.♙g3, aiming to push the h-pawn.

17...♘h7!

Not only demonstrating that g4-g5 will be hard to accomplish, but also in some lines threatening a sortie with ♙e7-g5 – against which White takes measures with his very next move.

18.♙f2 ♙d7 19.♙g3 g5

White can compel this move in the long run, but there was no necessity for it just now. Black ought to be thinking about counterplay, which he could obtain by playing 19...c6 and then b7-b5 (with or without a preliminary exchange on d5).

20. ♖b3

The knight on c5 is severely restricting the manoeuvres of White's pieces. He probably ought to have exchanged it as early as the opening stage.

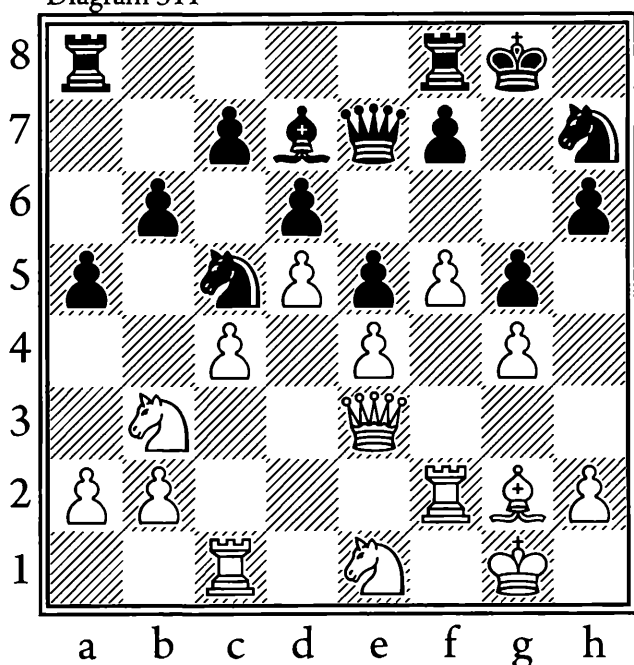
20...b6?

Depriving himself of his chief trump – c7-c6.

21. ♕e3

Intending ♜f3, White brings his queen to the centre.

Diagram 311

**21...f6**

Pawn moves, as we know, should be treated with particular care. With his last two moves Black has deprived himself of counterplay. The f6-square might have been needed for a knight; there was no reason to hurry with f7-f6. Black ought to have continued 21... ♜xb3 22. ♕xb3 ♖fb8, with a view to a5-a4 and c7-c5.

Petrosian may have been striving to construct an impregnable position as soon as possible and imagining that the pawn barrier from a5 to h6 served this purpose. But this, precisely, was his chief mistake in the game. Passive defence is rarely successful; while protecting yourself you

should constantly be seeking counterplay.

22. ♕f1

Clearing the second rank for his rooks.

22... ♜g7 23. ♜f3 ♖fc8 24. ♖cc2 ♕a4 25. ♜xc5 dxc5

Or 25... ♕xc2 26. ♜e6† etc. After 25... bxc5, the a-pawn could become a cause of constant worry for Black.

26. ♖cd2 ♕e8 27. h4

Renewing the kingside operations.

27... ♕f7 28. ♖h2 ♖h8 29. ♖h3

By placing his major pieces on the h-file and threatening to break into the enemy camp after h4xg5, White forces a further weakening of Black's position.

29...gxh4

Black is unable to avoid this move.

30. ♖xh4 ♜g5 31. ♖dh2 ♜xf3†

White could have compelled this exchange too, by arranging his bishop on d3, his king on f2 and his queen on h1.

32. ♕xf3 ♖h7 33. ♕e2 ♖ah8 34. ♖4h3 ♕e8 35. ♕c3 ♕d6 36. ♕d1 ♖f8 37. ♕d2 ♕d6

White possesses a spatial advantage and freedom for manoeuvre; the black pieces are cramped and tied to the defence of the h-pawn. Despite this, many people were inclined to consider the position drawish, as it is hard for White to increase his pressure.

Nevertheless White does have an extremely interesting plan available for playing to win, based on the strategic idea of playing on both flanks. The white king comes to the aid of its army, and its penetration into the black camp via the light squares has a decisive influence on the outcome of the battle.

38.♔f1 ♕d7 39.♔e1

The king is on its way.

39...♕e8 40.♕c2 ♕d7

Black will be unable to hold the a4-e8 diagonal, since his queen has to block the d-pawn, preventing a breakthrough by d5-d6.

41.♖d1 ♔f8 42.♖d2 ♖e7!

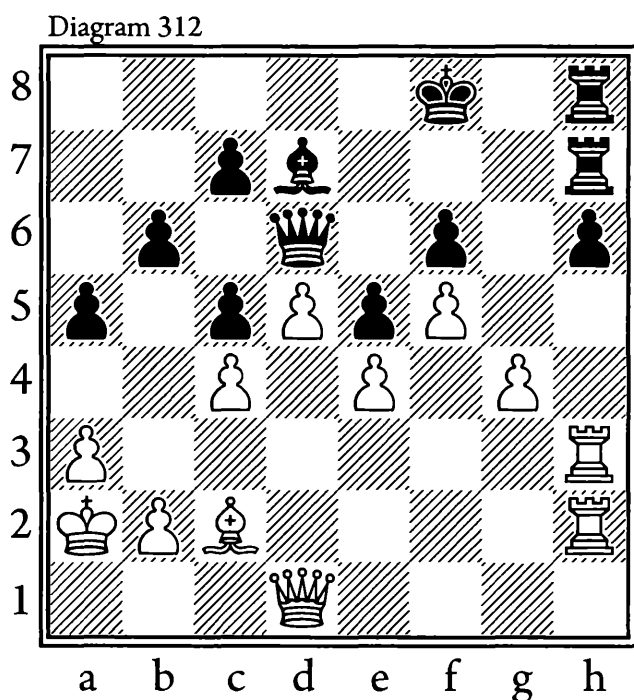
Tempting White with a pawn.

43.♕d1

After 43.♖xh6 ♖xh6 44.♖xh6 ♖xh6 45.♖xh6† ♖g7 46.♖xg7† ♔xg7 Black draws without trouble. The break with 43.d6 would also achieve nothing, as after 43...♖xd6 44.♖d3 ♖e7 the bishop on d7 is twice defended.

43...♕e8 44.♕e2 ♔g8 45.♖f2 ♔f8 46.♖fh2 ♔g8 47.♖g2 ♔f8 48.♔d1 ♖d6 49.♔c1 ♔g8 50.♕d1 ♔f8 51.♖gh2 ♔g7 52.♕c2 ♕d7 53.♖d1 ♔f8 54.♔b1 ♕e8 55.a3 ♕d7 56.♔a2

The first part of White's plan is accomplished: his king has been transferred to the queenside.



56...♕e8

By now Black has to be content with the role of a passive observer.

57.♕b3 ♕d7 58.♖h4 ♕e8 59.♖4h3 ♕d7 60.♖c2 ♕e8 61.♕a4

Forcing Black off the a4-e8 diagonal is the second part of White's plan.

61...♕xa4

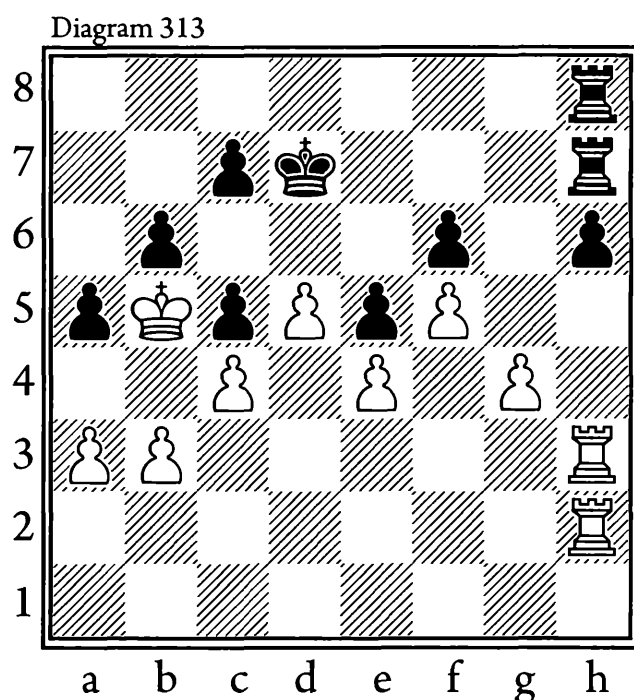
61...♕f7 62.♕c6, followed by ♖a4, would be worse still.

62.♖xa4 ♔e7 63.♔b3 ♖d7

Black could also defend with 63...♔f8, with the idea of freeing one of the rooks from the defence of the h-pawn after ♔f8-g7. In that case White achieves the win as follows: 64.♖c6! ♖xc6 (or 64...♔g7 65.♖xd6 cxd6 66.♔a4 etc.) 65.dxc6 ♔e7 66.♖d3 ♖d8 67.♖xd8 ♔xd8 68.♔a4. White then plays b2-b4 and (after exchanges on the b4-square) c4-c5, penetrating with his king to c5 after a further pawn exchange. The rest is simple, and the reader will find the winning method for himself.

64.♖h4 ♖xa4† 65.♔xa4 ♔d7 66.♔b5 ♔d6 67.b3 ♔d7 68.♖4h3

A little psychological trap.



Over a long sequence of moves, Black has been under pressure that has methodically mounted. It is wholly natural that Petrosian should now try to break free from this pressure by playing:

68...♖g7

In answer to 68...♔d6, White continues 69.♖h1 ♔d7 70.b4 axb4 71.axb4 cxb4 72.♔xb4 c6 (if 72...♔d6, then 73.♔b5 ♔d7 74.c5 bxc5 75.♔xc5 ♔e7 76.♔c6 etc.) 73.♖a3! ♔d6 74.♖a6 ♖b8 75.♖h2. Black is then forced to let the white rook on a6 penetrate to the 7th or 8th rank, after which his resistance will be broken.

69.♖xh6

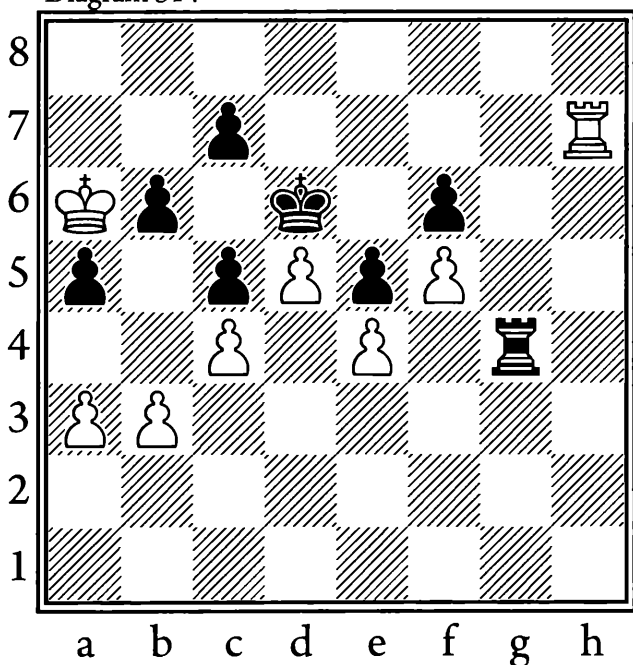
If White wanted, he could have applied the method from the last note by playing 69.♖h4 ♖gh7 70.b4 etc., but he reckoned that the text move would lead to the conclusion faster.

69...♖xh6 70.♖xh6 ♖xg4 71.♖h7†

This takes White along the wrong track. The logical culmination of the foregoing struggle would be 71.♖xf6 ♖xe4 72.♖f7† ♔d6 73. a4!, leaving Black defenceless against the white king's march to b7. With the loss of his c7-pawn Black could resign, as one of the white passed pawns would cost him his rook.

71...♔d6 72.♔a6

Diagram 314



“Having satisfied himself that 72.♖f7 ♖xe4 73.♖xf6† ♔d7 74.♖f7† ♔d6 75.f6 ♖f4 76.♖f8 e4 was no good for him, Lipnitsky goes in for an interesting line that aims for mate.” (Peter Romanovsky)

72...♖xe4

Strangely enough, both players at this point overlooked Black's saving move 72...a4!! The point is that after 73.bxa4 ♖xe4 74.♔b7 ♖xc4 75.♔c8, Black rescues himself from mate by the simple 75...♔xd5 (75...e4 is also playable).

Now, after the mutual lapse, White quickly forces the win.

“Black should keep his rook on g4 to fend off the threat of ♔a6-b7-c8. He could have secured at least a draw by playing 72...a4! 73.♔b7 axb3 74.♖xc7 b2 75.♖c6† ♔d7 76.♖xb6 ♖xe4 77.♖xb2 ♖xc4.” (Romanovsky)

73.♔b7 ♖e3

Now 73...a4 would be met by 74.♔c8 with unavoidable mate. In that case the white king's long, hard trek, right across the board from g1 to c8, would end in total triumph.

“If 73...♖f4, then 74.♔c8 e4 75.♖d7† ♔e5 76.♖e7† ♔xf5 77.♔xc7, and there is no stopping the d-pawn. But then, other continuations also fail to save the game for Black.” (Romanovsky)

74.♖f7

In a few moves, White's passed pawns on the f- and d-files will decide the game.

74...a4 75.♖xf6† ♔d7 76.bxa4 e4 77.♖f7† ♔d8 78.♖xc7 ♖f3 79.d6 ♖xf5 80.♖e7 e3 81.♔c6 1–0

Game 6

S. Furman – I. Lipnitsky

Baku 1951

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4

This encounter came a few rounds before the end of the contest (a semi-final of the 19th USSR Championship), when the masters Novotelnov, Taimanov and Kholmov had already made sure of the first three places. Furman and I were the chief candidates for fourth place, which also conferred the right to play in the Championship final – so the result of our individual game was of decisive importance to us.

And yet preparing for this game proved extremely difficult.

The two of us had been sharing a hotel room for the past month, preparing for the rounds of the tournament together and discussing all sorts of variations. Each of us was more or less versed in the other's opening "personality". I knew that Furman was willing to allow the Nimzo-Indian Defence most of the time, as he was one of its finest connoisseurs. I decided I would begin with that opening but then transpose to the Ragozin Defence, which – so it seemed to me – would be less pleasant for Furman to play.

That is the explanation for the order of the first six moves.

4.e3 0–0 5.♘f3 d5 6.♗d3 ♘c6

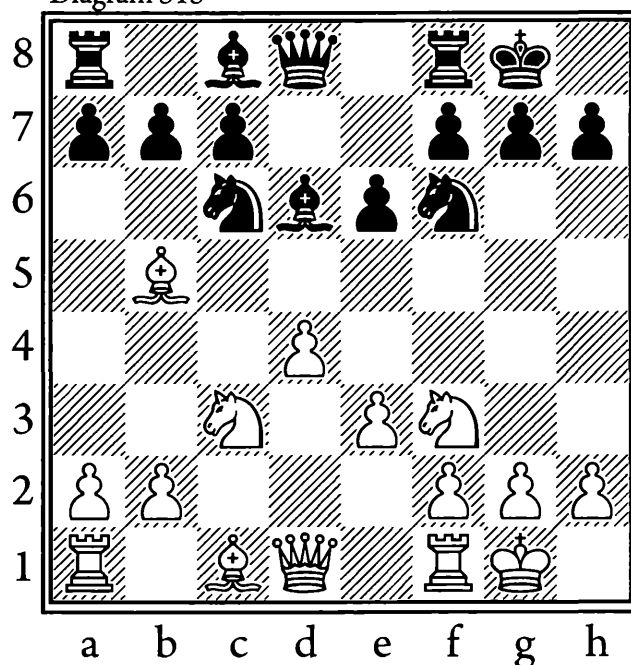
Clearly this move is no better than 6...c5, 6...b6 or 6...♘bd7, after which the game would remain in Nimzo-Indian channels. But we already know that choosing this or that continuation is quite often a purely psychological matter.

7.0–0 dxc4

Black reveals his intention to sacrifice a pawn. Otherwise he could first have played 7...a6, to guard the b5-square.

8.♗xc4 ♗d6 9.♗b5

Diagram 315



9...e5!

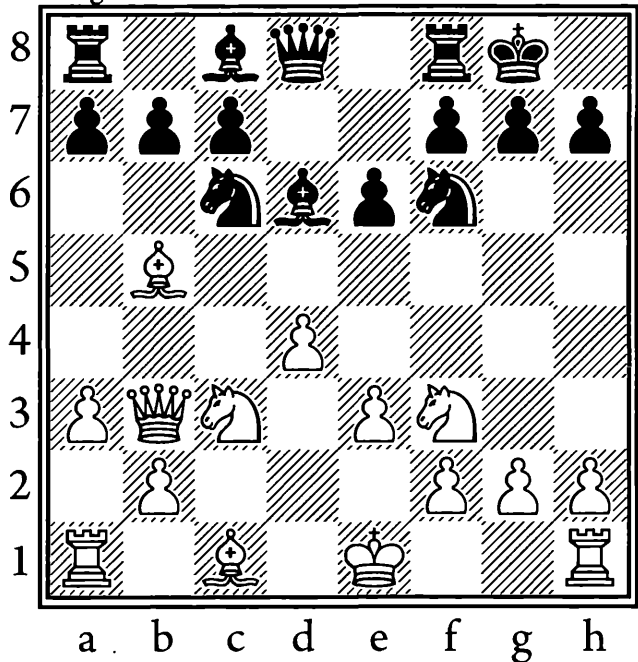
Outwardly this sacrifice recalls an analogous one in Capablanca – Ragozin (Moscow 1936). But there is an essential distinction, as in this case the sacrifice is based on a completely different idea.

Some annotators, not taking the time to look up the Capablanca – Ragozin game, even assert that this very position had arisen in it – which is quite wrong.

In actual fact, the position in the earlier game differed in that White had not castled but had his queen on b3 and a pawn on a3. The opening moves were 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♗b3 ♘c6 5.e3 d5 6.♘f3 0–0 7.a3 dxc4 8.♗xc4 ♗d6 9.♗b5.

(See diagram next page)

Diagram 316



Hence, after 9...e5! 10.♙xc6 exd4 11.♘xd4 bxc6 12.♘xc6 ♖d7 13.♘d4, Black had the strong move 13...♗g4! available, with an immediate and powerful attack against White's king position.

In our case, with White's pieces more favourably placed (in particular the queen on d1), Black has no forcing line to attack the king. The positional point of his pawn sacrifice is to secure a lasting initiative in the centre of the board, making particular use of the weakened light squares in his opponent's camp.

Therefore by sacrificing a pawn in this position, I hoped my novelty would catch my opponent unawares. But as it turned out, I was very much mistaken. Furman had been analysing this position not long before the tournament. From his study of the lines arising from it, he concluded that the whole variation was favourable to White.

Thus the psychological effect of my innovation was zero. But since I didn't know this during the game, I was very satisfied when I played 9...e5!.

10.♙xc6 exd4 11.♙xb7

Other possibilities are 11.exd4 bxc6 12.♙g5 ♙f5 13.♙e1 ♙e8 14.♗d2 ♗d7 15.♙xf6 gxf6

16.♗h6 ♙g6, and 11.♘xd4 bxc6 12.♘xc6 ♗e8 13.♘d4 ♙b7.

11...♙xb7 12.♘xd4

In this situation, both sides were contented: White was happy to have won a pawn, Black was happy to have sacrificed it.

12...♗d7

An alternative was 12...♗e8, transposing to a position in the note to 11.♙xb7. Observe that in reply, 13.♗a4 would not be good in view of 13...♙xh2† 14.♙xh2 ♗e5† 15.f4 (15.♙g1 is wholly bad: 15...♘g4 16.f4 ♗h5) 15...♗h5† 16.♙g3 ♗g4† 17.♙f2 ♗xg2† 18.♙e1 c5! 19.♘de2 ♘g4 and Black has a winning attack.

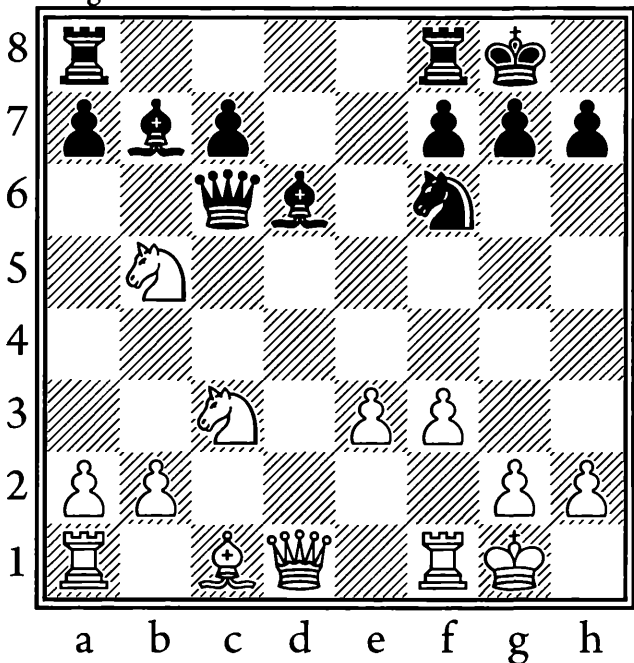
13.♘db5

It would be interesting to try 13.f3! at once.

13...♗c6 14.f3

It was on the basis of this position that White judged the variation to be in his favour.

Diagram 317



Let's take a closer look at the ideas in the position. For White, what have been the direct consequences of playing to win a pawn?

(1) The light squares in his position are very weak.

(2) His queenside pieces are inadequately developed.

From this point of view the move 14.f3 is most significant. It not only nullifies the action of Black's battery on the h1-a8 diagonal, but also – and most importantly – it prepares e3-e4. With the latter move White aims to complete the mobilization of his queenside forces and compensate, in some measure, for the absence of the king's bishop by arranging his pawns on light squares.

Black has finished all his mobilization, and the initiative is in his hands. Yet he will not have adequate compensation for the sacrificed pawn if White succeeds in carrying out his plan. How then is Black to make something of his initiative, especially considering that he doesn't have the option of attacking the king as in Capablanca – Ragozin?

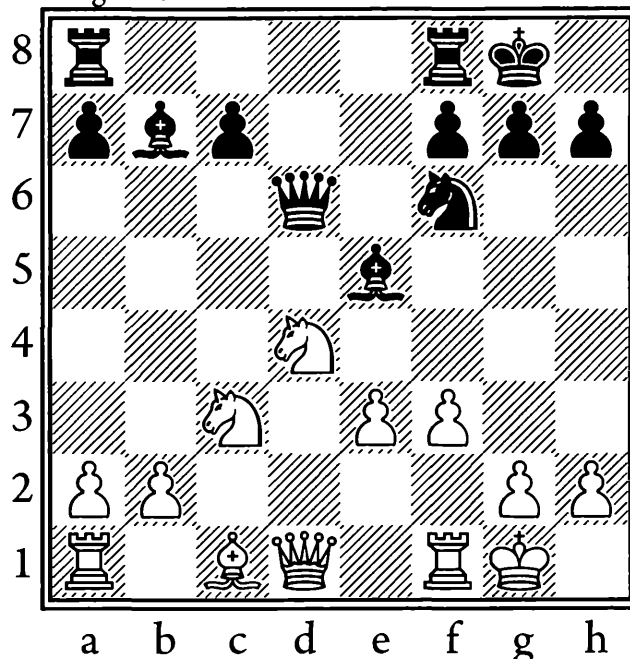
We may answer that Black must find a way of developing his initiative that makes his opponent's plan as difficult as possible to implement. This is what Black's next few moves aim to do.

14...♙e5!

When analysing the last diagram position, Furman had examined 14...♙c5. This natural move does indeed suggest itself, but is refuted by 15.♘d4! when the black queen has no convenient square to withdraw to. For instance, 15...♙d6 16.♘a4 (16.♘b3 is also good), exchanging one of the bishops; or 15...♙d7 16.♘b3 ♙d6 17.e4! etc.

Now, however, 15.♘d4 can be met by 15...♙d6!, when the attack against h2 makes White weaken his position further.

Diagram 318



Thus for example, 16.f4 shields h2 and leads to the exchange of one of the enemy bishops; but Black can then exert dangerous combined pressure along the central d- and e-files and the reopened h1-a8 diagonal. After 16...♙xd4 there are these possibilities:

(a) 17.♙xd4 ♙c6! (the incurable weaknesses in White's position recall an analogous spectacle in Kotov – Botvinnik, Leningrad 1939) 18.♙d2 ♙ad8 19.♙f2 ♙fe8

(b) 17.exd4 ♙fe8, followed by ...♙ad8 and ...♙c6 or ...♙b6. Black's pressure makes an imposing sight.

15.♙c2

The queen will have to be removed from the open d-file anyway, so White does this at once, particularly since 15...♘g4 was an additional threat.

He could not play 15.♙e2 or 15.e4, as after 15...♙a6 Black would win the exchange.

15...♙fd8 16.a4

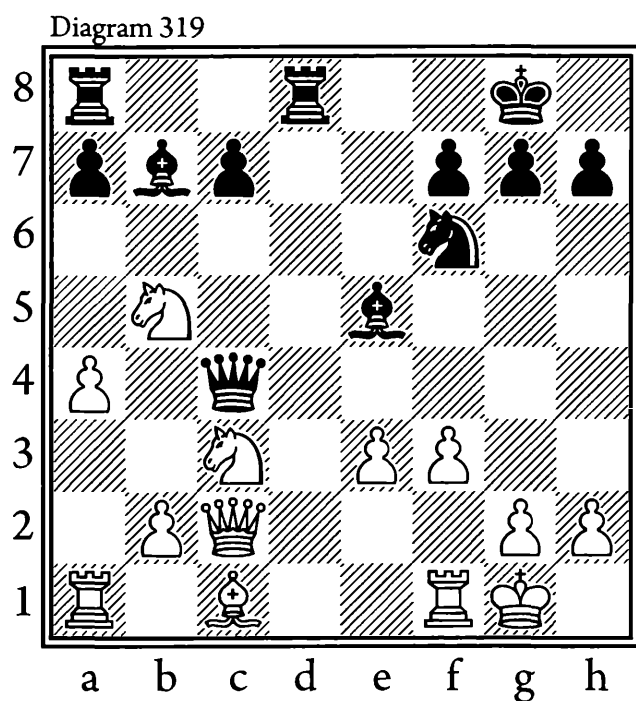
As before, 16.e4 is no good on account of 16...♙a6 17.a4 ♙b6† 18.♙h1 c6, or 18.♙f2 c6 and 19...♙d4, winning for Black. White therefore prepares e3-e4 by defending his knight on b5 first.

Instead of this, he could have offered his opponent a pawn by 16.♘d4, so as to obtain equal chances after 16...♙xd4 17.exd4 ♖xd4 18.♙e3!. But of course Black would not be in a hurry to regain his pawn (which he did, after all, sacrifice and not lose). He would have the choice between 16...♙c4 (as occurs in the game) and 16...♙d6.

For example the continuation could be 16...♙d6 17.♘f5 ♙xh2† (this time Black *can* take the pawn back, as it does not mean relinquishing the initiative) 18.♙h1 ♙e5 19. f4 ♙c5! 20.♙xh2 (or 20.b4 ♙c4 with the threats of ...♙xf1† and ...♙e4) 20...♙e4, followed by 21...♙xf5 with advantage to Black.

16...♙c4!

A very unpleasant move for White to face, as Black is developing his initiative while at the same time impeding his opponent's plan.



The threats of 17...♙xh2†! and 17...♙h4 inhibit White's further mobilization.

17.♙f2

White parries the threats just mentioned, but this means a further weakening of d3, where a rook immediately penetrates.

17...♖d3 18.♙h1 ♖ad8

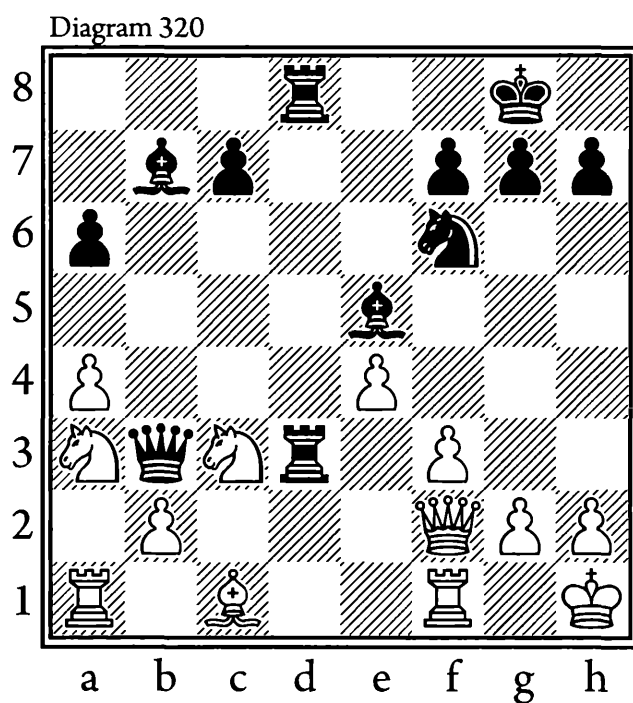
Black's initiative is steadily growing.

Let me once again take the opportunity to emphasize a thought that was conveyed in the "Modern Gambits" chapter. When operating with this kind of initiative in return for a pawn, you should never be discouraged by the impossibility of mounting a quick attack against the king – since there may be sufficient compensation in powerful pressure exerted on the opponent's position as a whole.

19.e4

White has made this move at last, but by now his opponent's pieces have managed to gain control of most of the board.

19...a6 20.♘a3 ♙b3



21.♘ab1

On completing its excursion via f3-d4-b5-a3, the king's knight now occupies the starting square of its colleague, so as to bolster the latter on the c3-square.

Instead of this retreat, White could have brought his bishop out. However, 21.♙g5 could be met by 21...h6 22.♙xf6 (or 22.♙h4 ♖d2! etc.) 22...♙xf6, when White is no better

off at all than in the actual game.

In the event of 21.♔e3, there is once again no point in regaining the pawn by 21...♕xc3, as this would diminish the pressure. Nor would 21...♕xe4 22.♖xe4 be any good: 22...♗xe4 23.fxe4 ♖xe3 24.♗c4!, or 22...♖xe3 23.♗c4! etc. However, Black could carry on strengthening his position by 21...a5, with ♕b7-a6 to follow. A white knight could not establish itself on b5, in view of the possible reply c7-c6.

By now it looks as if White's position can scarcely be held.

21...♕d4

The e5-square has served as a hospitable post for the black bishop – which stayed there, quite undisturbed, for a full six moves (such a scenario in the middlegame is fairly rare). However, the bishop has already fulfilled its role in the centre; right now there is more need for it on c5, which is where Black proceeds to transfer it.

22.♖e2 ♕c5

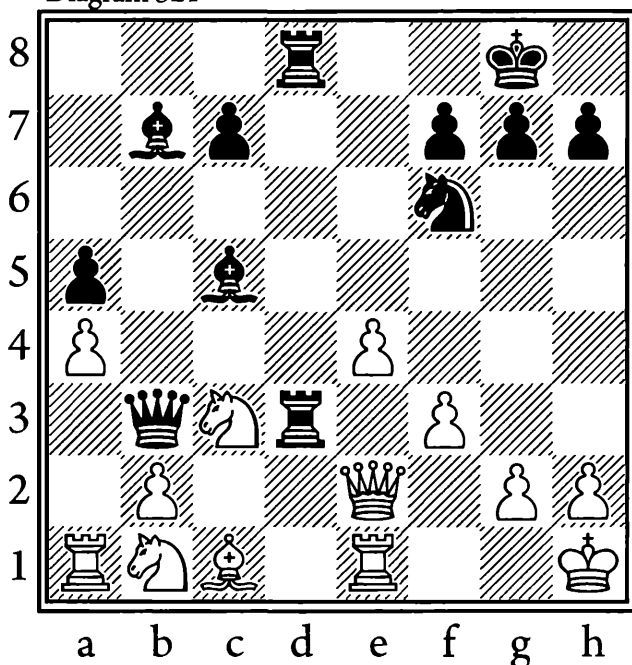
Now there is a threat of a6-a5 and ♕b7-a6. White is deprived of the reply 23.♖a3.

23.♖e1

White removes this rook from the f1-a6 diagonal.

23...a5

Diagram 321



24.♗d2

Other moves also fail to save him. For example 24.♕g5 ♕a6, and now:

(a) 25.e5 ♖e3 26.♗d2 ♗e6 27.♗d1 ♖xe5

(b) 25.♗d5 ♖3xd5 26.♗xa6 ♖xg5

(c) 25.♕xf6 gxf6 26.♗d5 ♖3xd5 27.♗xa6 ♖d1 28.♗c3 ♖xa1 29.♖xa1 ♗xb2 30.♖d1 ♖xd1† 31.♗xd1 ♗d4 32.♗c8† (or 32.♗f1 ♗xa4, and Black's passed pawns are decisive) 32...♕f8 33.♗g4† ♔h8 34.f4 f5!, and Black wins after either 35.exf5 ♕c5 or 35.♗f3 ♕c5 36.♗f1 fxe4.

24...♗c2

Now White has run out of moves. Black is threatening 25...♖xd2. He answers 25.♖d1 with 25...♕a6, and 25.♗c4 with 25...♖xc3.

25.♗f1 ♗xe2 26.♖xe2

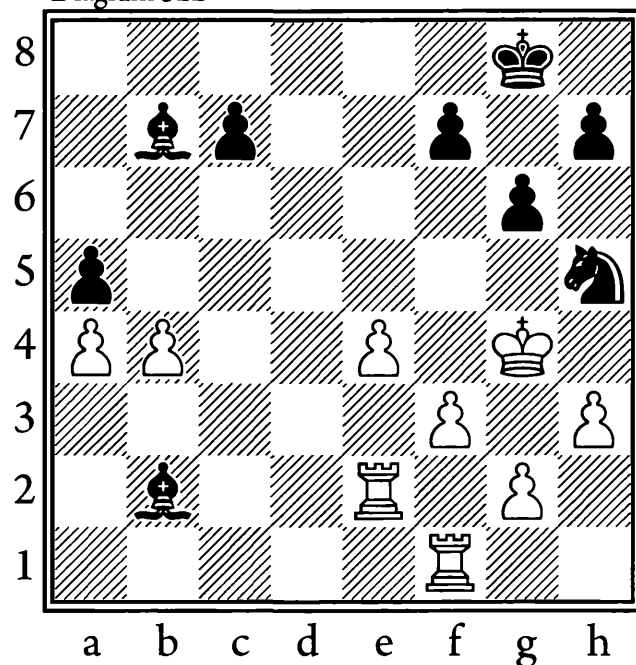
Or 26.♗xe2 ♕f2 etc.

26...♖d1!

The decisive penetration into White's position has proceeded by way of the weakened light squares (♗d7-c6-c4-b3-c2; ♖d8-d3-d1). Black now wins two pieces for a rook.

27.♗xd1 ♖xd1 28.h3 ♖xf1† 29.♔h2 ♕g1† 30.♔g3 ♗h5† 31.♔g4 g6 32.b4 ♕d4 33.♕b2 ♕xb2 34.♖xf1

Diagram 322



Black announced mate in 5 moves:

**34...♙c8† 35.♖g5 ♜f6† 36.♖h6 ♜g7†
37.♖g5 h6† 38.♖h4 ♜f6 mate**

This game gave me a great deal of satisfaction because by developing my strategic initiative in a systematic way, I managed to show that the pawn sacrifice is playable in this variation even when there is no attack against the king.

Game 7

P. Keres – I. Lipnitsky

19th USSR Championship, Moscow 1951

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0–0
5.♙d3 d5 6.♘f3 ♘c6**

So the game has transposed from the Nimzo-Indian to the Ragozin Defence.

7.0–0 h6

The gambit variation 7...dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♜d6 9.♙b5 e5! 10.♙xc6 exd4 has only one drawback: White can decline the pawn with 11.exd4 bxc6 12.♙g5, when it is not easy for Black to create any complications. For the purposes of drawing, however, the variation is quite adequate.

Black's 7...h6 enables him to maintain the tension. The point of the move is to guard the g5-square in good time against raids by the white pieces.

8.h3

Pursuing a similar aim – to keep the black pieces out of g4.

8...dxc4

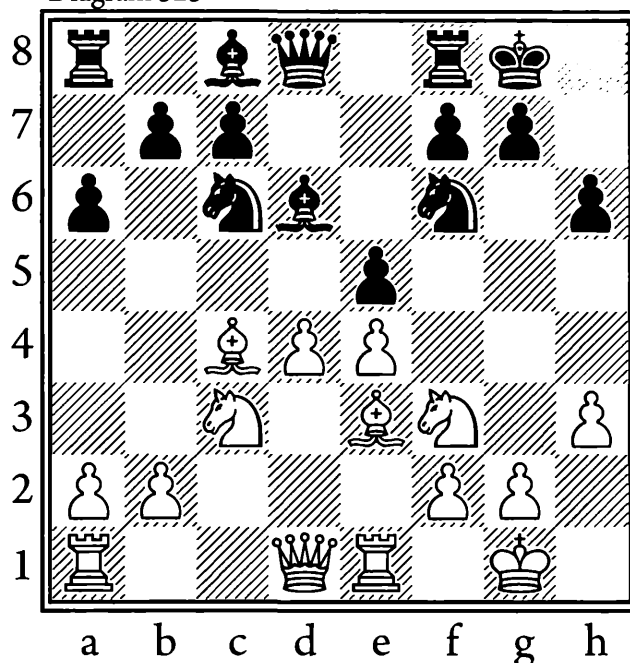
Black did not have to hurry with this exchange. Further waiting moves such as 8...a6 or 8...♞e7 are interesting.

9.♙xc4 ♜d6 10.e4 e5 11.♙e3

White bolsters his centre, exploiting the fact that Black cannot reply with 11...♙g4 or 11...♘g4.

11...a6 12.♞e1

Diagram 323



12...♙d7?

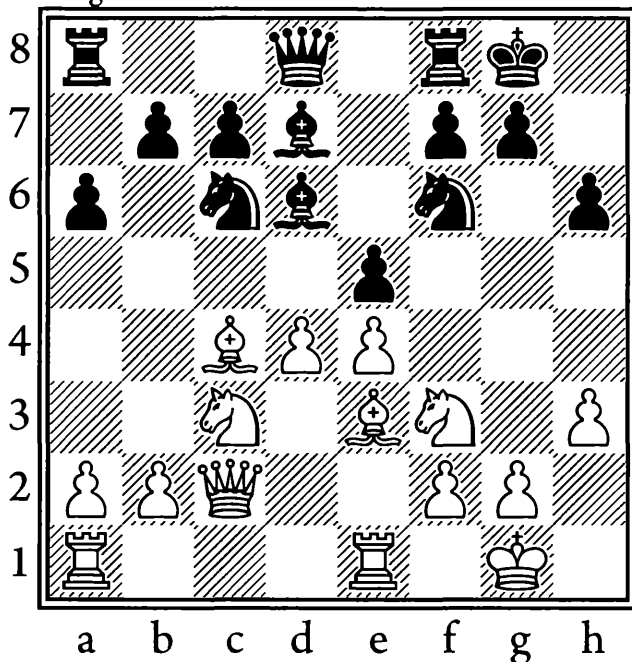
Having allowed his opponent to set up a pawn-and-piece centre, Black ought to take steps to attack it without delay. This could have been achieved by 12...b5! and 13...♙b7, completing the development of the minor pieces and creating a threat (with b5-b4) against the e4-pawn.

13.♞c2

The opening has turned out favourably for White. He has a clear ascendancy in the centre. Hence his strategic plan is fairly simple. He threatens to improve the placing of his pieces still further (e.g. ♞ad1), and then, after suitable preparation, to exchange twice on e5 and play f2-f4.

With his 12th move Black denied himself the possibility of attacking the white centre; he now finds it distinctly difficult to create counterplay.

Diagram 324



13...Rxe8?

In many a game of chess you can see the workings of a strange law: one mistake leads to another. The explanation is fairly simple, though. The first mistake leads to a worsening of your position, so that problems of greater complexity arise – and you commit fresh errors trying to solve them.

At this point Black should have continued 13...b5 14.♙f1 exd4 15.♘xd4 ♘xd4 16.♙xd4 c5 17.♙xf6 ♙xf6 18.♘d5 ♙g6 (or 18...♙e6), and although the initiative remains with White, there has been considerable simplification and Black can hope to equalize – for example, 18...♙g6 19.♙d2 ♙c6 20.e5 ♙xd5 etc.

14.a3

Now Black could still opt for the continuation just mentioned, but only an inferior version of it. For example: 14...b5 15.♙a2 (in the previous line White could not retreat to b3 on account of a subsequent c5-c4) 15...exd4 16.♘xd4 ♘xd4 17.♙xd4 c5 18.♙e3!, and the advantage is with White.

Instead of 14.a3 White could have played 14.♖ad1 if he had wanted, depriving Black of this entire possibility.

14...exd4 15.♘xd4 ♘e5 16.♙f1! ♘g6

17.♖ad1 ♙e7 18.g3!

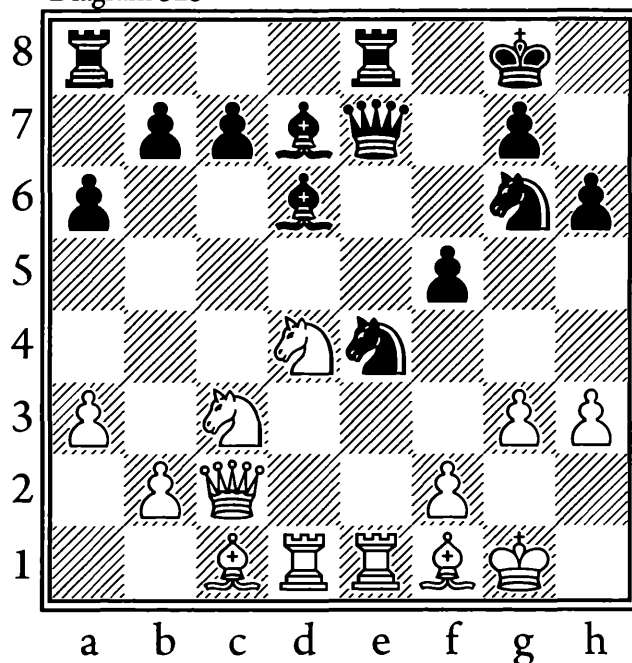
White intently goes about preparing f2-f4, and temporarily sacrifices a pawn. Now the point of his 16th move is clear: the pawn on h3 is protected.

18...♘xe4!

Trying to sharpen the play, as after ♙f1-g2 and f2-f4 there would be absolutely nothing for Black to undertake.

19.♙c1 f5

Diagram 325



20.♙g2!

Finely played! With 20.f3 ♙xg3 21.fxe4 ♙xe1 22.♖xe1 White would obtain two pieces for a rook and two pawns, but the exposed position of his king would give his opponent counter-chances.

Now White wins his pawn back and obtains powerful pressure along the open files against the black position.

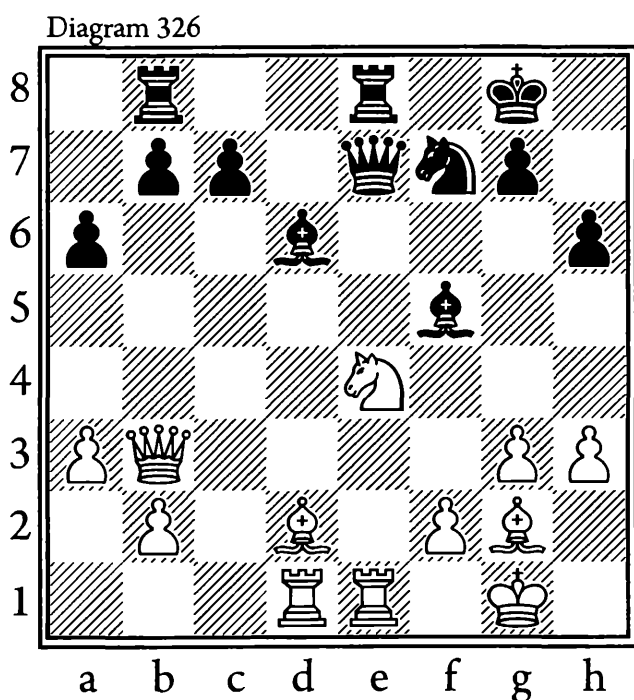
20...♘e5 21.♘xf5! ♙xf5 22.♘xe4 ♘f7!

Black covers his king – parrying the threat of 23.♙b3† and 24.♙xb7 – at the same time as pinning the white knight on e4.

23. ♖b3 ♜ab8 24. ♕d2!

Protecting his rook on e1, White sets up a threat to capture on d6 – against which Black is in fact defenceless.

On 24... ♕e5, there follows 25. ♕b4!. A curious situation! White does not have a single piece beyond the 4th rank, yet his pressure on Black's position is so great that it is difficult to point to a satisfactory defence.

**24... ♕e6**

This leads to a lost ending. In the tournament bulletin, Soviet Master L. Abramov recommends 24... ♕e6 as strongest. He gives the continuation 25. ♖c2 ♕f5 26. ♖c1 ♖d7 27. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 28. ♖h2 ♖f7 with double-edged play, although even so “White retains the advantage.”

However, if in this variation White plays 28. ♖xe8† ♖xe8 29. ♕f4!, then Black's position – as before – is not exactly easy.

25. ♖xe6 ♖xe6

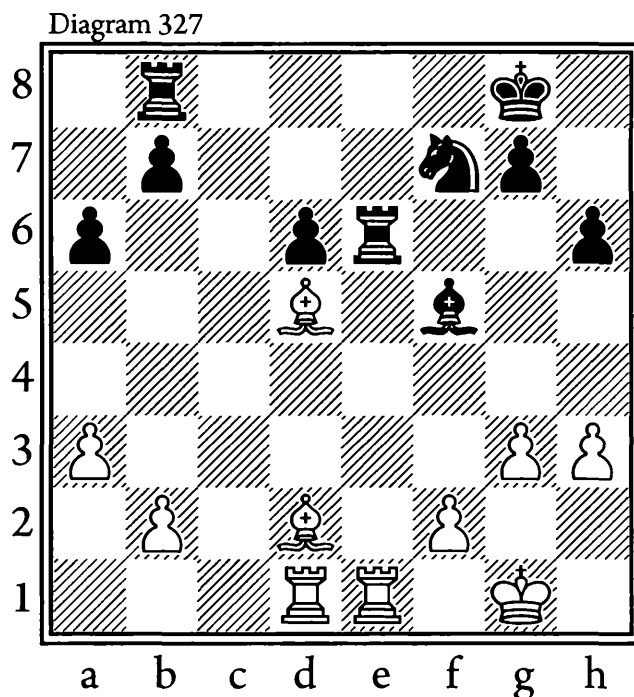
Or 25... ♕xe6 26. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 27. ♕f4! with the same result.

26. ♖xd6 cxd6

There is no improvement in 26... ♖xd6 27. ♕f4!, or 26... ♖xe1† 27. ♖xe1 ♖xd6 28. ♖e7 ♖e8 29. ♕d5†! (not 29. ♕f4 at once, because of 29... ♖f8) 29... ♖h7 30. ♕f4, and Black comes to grief.

27. ♕d5!

White ensures that a rook will break through to the 7th rank.

**27... ♖xe1† 28. ♖xe1 ♖f8 29. ♖c1 ♖d8 30. ♖c7 ♕e6**

If 30... ♖c8, then 31. ♕a5 ♖c6 32. ♖f7† ♖e8 33. ♕c3 ♖e7 34. ♕xg7 ♖c1† 35. ♖g2 ♖c2 36. ♖f8† ♖d7 37. ♕xb7 (or 37. ♕f3) and White wins.

Still, as Black has nothing to lose, he might as well have gone in for this variation in which it is essential for White to find a series of strong moves.

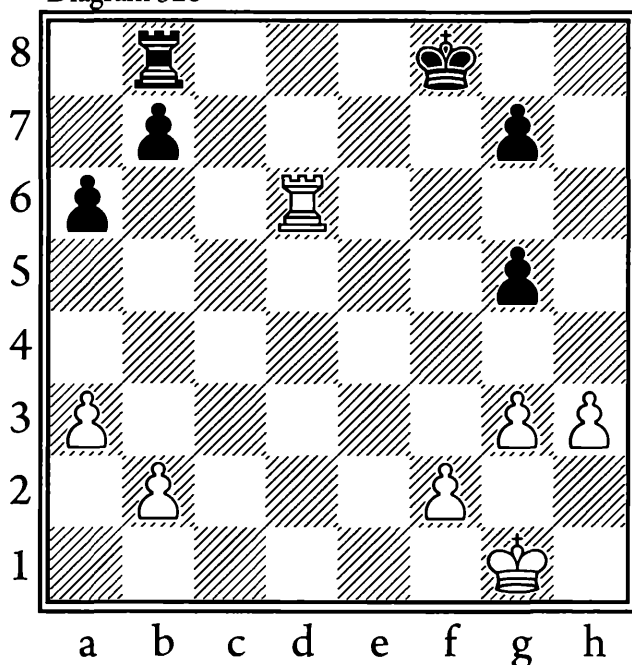
31. ♕xe6 ♖xe6 32. ♖d7 ♖g5

Black is unable to defend all his weaknesses. The attempt to reach a rook endgame with one pawn less, by 32... ♖c5 33. ♖xd6 ♖e4, fails to 34. ♕b4!.

33. ♕xg5 hxg5 34. ♖xd6

It is obvious that in this endgame Black does not even have minimal saving chances. So it would have been simpler to resign. But it often happens that when short on the clock, you do not manage to cease resistance in time.

Diagram 328



34...♖c8 35.♔g2 ♖c5 36.♖b6 ♖c7 37.♔f3 ♖f7† 38.♔g4!

The shortest path to victory.

38...♖xf2 39.♖xb7 ♖h2 40.a4 a5 41.♖b5 1–0

The time control is reached, and Black has time to resign the game.

Keres splendidly exploited his opponent's opening omissions in the treatment of the centre.

Game 8

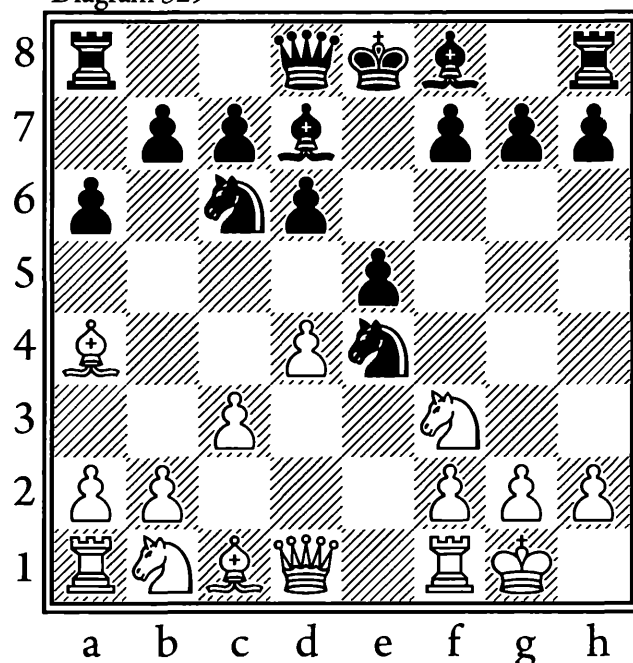
L. Aronin – I. Lipnitsky

Tbilisi 1951

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6 5.c3 ♙d7 6.d4 ♘f6 7.0–0

A somewhat more accurate continuation is 7.♘bd2. The move in the game allows Black to play for a draw, if he wants, by 7...♘xe4.

Diagram 329



For example, 8.♖e1 ♘f6 9.♙xc6 ♙xc6 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♖xd8† ♖xd8 12.♘xe5 ♙e4!, and White is not in a position to exploit the pin on the e-file:

(a) 13.f3 ♙c5† 14.♙e3 ♙xe3† 15.♖xe3 ♖d1† 16.♔f2 ♙xb1 17.♘g6† ♘e4†! and Black wins (analysis by Rauzer).

(b) 13.♙g5 ♙e7 14.♙xf6 gxf6! (14...♙xf6 would lose a piece to 15.♘f3) with advantage to Black.

In a game against me in Kiev (1950), Geller tried to improve on White's play with 9.dxe5 (instead of 9.♙xc6) 9...♘xe5 10.♘xe5 dxe5 11.♖xe5† ♙e7 12.♙g5, making Black's development difficult. However, after 12...♙xa4 13.♖xa4† ♖d7 14.♖xd7† ♔xd7 15.♘d2 h6 16.♙h4 ♖ae8 17.♘f3 ♙d8! (but not 17...♙d6? 18.♙xf6 etc.), Black achieved equality.

7...♙e7 8.♖e1 0–0 9.♘bd2 exd4 10.cxd4 ♘b4

Black allows his opponent a preponderance of pawns in the centre, but works up active

counterplay on the queenside in return. This idea was first put into practice by Romanovsky in a game with Yates (Moscow 1925).

11.♙xd7

11.♙b3 is a possible alternative, as in the third match game Euwe – Keres, Amsterdam 1939.

11...♖xd7 12.♖b3

In a theoretical note on this variation published in *Chess in the USSR*, Ilia Kan refers to the game Saigin – Lipnitsky (Kiev 1950), which continued 12.d5 a5 13.♘f1 ♜fe8 14.a3 ♘a6 15.♘g3 g6 16.♙g5 ♘g4, and White's position deserves preference.

The move in the game also leads to complex play.

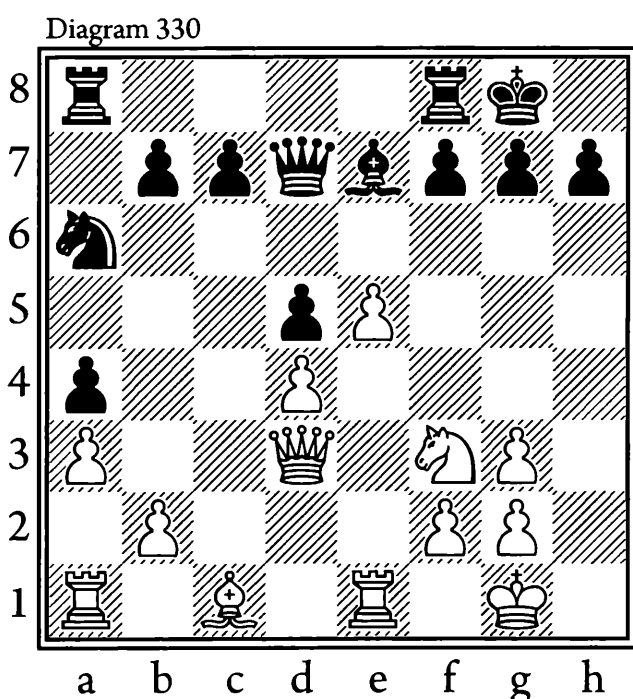
12...a5 13.a3 ♘a6 14.♘f1 d5 15.e5 a4

An important intermediate move. White is forced to decide where to place his queen.

16.♖d3

If White withdrew his queen to c2 now, he would not have to do it later with loss of tempo – but 16.♖c2 would also have its snags: after ♜f8-c8 and c7-c5, Black would be threatening to take on d4.

16...♘e4 17.♘g3 ♘xg3 18.hxg3



18...c5!

The start of an offensive on the queen's wing which has all the more point since the white queenside pawns are fixed and offer a convenient object of attack. Furthermore Black has the important manoeuvre ♜a8-a6-b6(c6) at his disposal, allowing him to use the rook on the 6th rank for both aggressive and defensive purposes.

The continuation c7-c5 was recommended by Botvinnik in his notes to Smyslov – Keres (USSR Absolute Championship Match Tournament, Moscow/Leningrad 1941), where in a similar position Black played c7-c6.

19.♙g5

Aronin quite rightly decides to go for an attack on his opponent's king. The further course of the game is predetermined: both players will try to force events and create decisive threats – White on the kingside, Black on the queenside.

19...c4 20.♖c2 ♘c7

The knight heads for b5, from where it will put pressure on d4, ♜3 and ♜3. The other plan of attack with b7-b5-b4 seemed less promising.

21.♙xe7 ♖xe7 22.♘h4 ♘b5 23.♘f5 ♖d7 24.♜ad1 c3 25.g4 ♜fc8 26.♜e3!

Black's answer to 26.♖c1 would not be 26...cxb2 on account of 27.♖g5! with a strong attack, but simply 26...h6. Then White could not play 27.g5, as the knight on f5 would be left undefended.

A peculiarity of the position is that neither side has an interest in initiating the exchange of the c3-pawn for the b2-pawn.

26...♜c6

Instead of this move, 26...♜a6 looked tempting, but in many variations it would have major drawbacks (see the note to White's 28th).

27.♖h3 ♜g6 28.♘e3

Black was threatening to capture on g4, not fearing 29.♘e7† because of 29...♙f8. With his rook on c8, this would have cost him the exchange.

In withdrawing his knight to e3 White frees the path of his f-pawn, imagining that his kingside pawn storm should decide the game in a few moves. But Aronin is overlooking a surprising refutation.

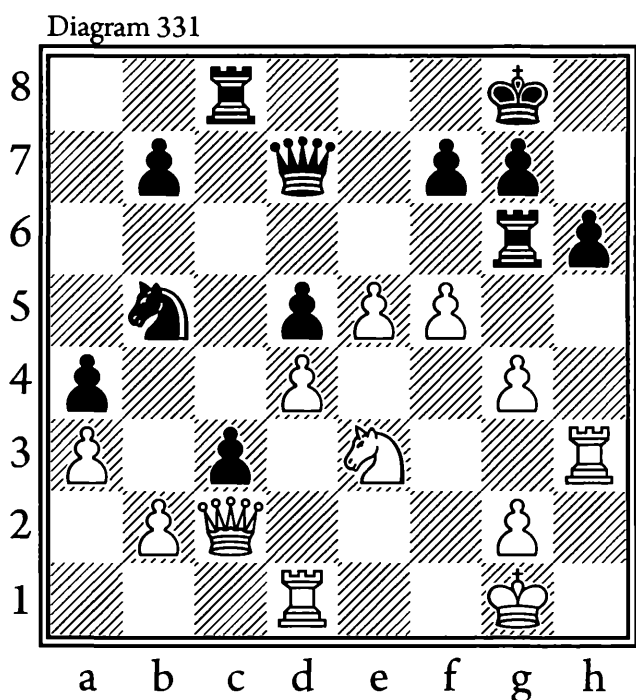
Perhaps the correct method of attack consisted in 28.♖h4! followed by ♜d1-d3-h3. For instance after 28...♜c8 29.♜d3 h6 30.♜dh3 there would be a threat to sacrifice on h6 in some lines. The combined task of defending stubbornly while at the same time increasing the pressure on the opposite wing would demand extremely accurate play on Black's part. In this eventuality it cannot be said for sure that he would gain the advantage.

28...♜c8 29.f4 h6

This is stronger than 29...h5, to which White's simplest reply would be 30.♜xh5 (30.gxh5 ♜xh3) 30...cxb2 31.♜xb2 ♜xg4 32.♜b1.

30.f5

He should have played 30.g5, and answered 30...♜b6! with 31.bxc3 as in the game.



30...♜b6!

After the rook moves away to this unexpected square, White's position collapses in a few moves. Interestingly, White himself is now forced to open up files for the invasion of the black rooks, as there is no other defence against 31...♘xd4! 32.♜xd4 cxb2 33.♜b1 ♜c1†.

31.bxc3 ♘xc3 32.♜f1

Or 32.♜c1 ♘e2† etc.

32...♘e4 33.♜d1 ♘g5 34.♜g3 ♜b3 35.f6 g6 36.♜e1 ♜cc3 37.♜f2 ♘e4 38.♜f4 g5 39.e6 ♜xe6 40.♜f3 ♘xg3 0-1

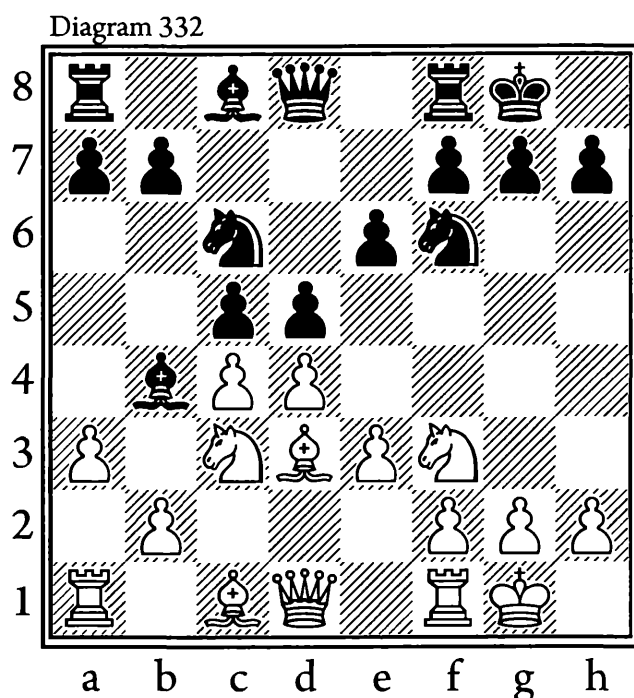
Game 9

I. Lipnitsky – A. Suetin

Odessa 1952

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♘f3 d5 6.♙d3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3

This position is capable of satisfying players of the most varied inclinations.



Those who like playing against an isolated pawn have the continuation 8...dxc4 9.♙xc4 cxd4 10.exd4 ♙e7 at their disposal. They should hardly be afraid of 11.b4, if only because of 11...b6 12.♙b2 ♙b7 13.♖b3 ♙d6! (but not 13...♜xd4 14.♜xd4 ♖xd4 15.♜d5! and wins), followed by transferring the knight from c6 to d5. White cannot prevent this with 14.d5, in view of 14...exd5 15.♜xd5 ♜xd5 16.♙xd5 ♜d4! (but not 16...♜a5 17.♖c3!) 17.♜xd4 ♙xd5.

After 13...♙d6! the game Lipnitsky – Sidorov, played in the same event as Lipnitsky – Suetin (the USSR Team Championship), continued: 14.♖fe1 (the rook ought to be on the d-file) 14...♜e7 15.♜e5 ♜ed5 16.♜e2 ♜h5 17.♖h3 ♜df4 18.♖g4 ♙xe5 19.dxe5 ♖d2! with advantage to Black.

Retreating the bishop to a5 leads to a highly complex struggle. In the well-known game Novotelnov – Smyslov (Moscow 1951), White sacrificed his rook on a1: 8...♙a5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.dxc5 ♙xc3 11.bxc3 ♖a5 12.c4! ♖c3 13.cxd5! ♖xa1 14.♖c2 ♜a5 15.e4 Since then, attempts have been made to strengthen the variation for Black.

8...♙xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♖c7 11.♙b2

Some other interesting continuations have also been employed here, for example 11.♙d3 e5 12.♖c2, aiming to recapture on d4 with the c-pawn, pinning the black knight on c6.

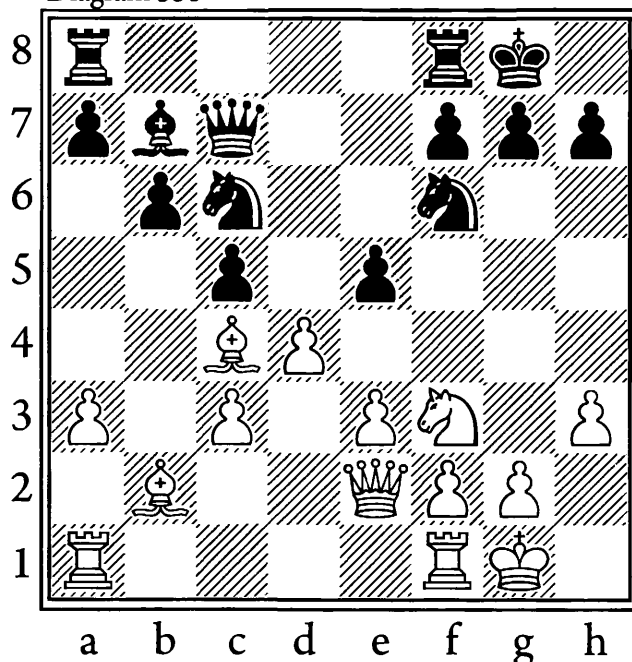
In playing 11.♙b2, White is counting on opening up lines for his bishops sooner or later, and obtaining an attack on the black king.

11...b6 12.♖e2 e5 13.h3

A most important prophylactic move, preventing any sallies to g4 which the black pieces would have available in some lines.

13...♙b7

Diagram 333



14.♙a2!

White intends to play d4-d5 and c3-c4. He withdraws his bishop in advance, so that if Black answers d4-d5 with ♜c6-a5, he will not be forcing the exchange of White's bishop or the win of the d-pawn.

14...♖fe8

Black doesn't figure out his opponent's scheme; otherwise he would have played 14...♖fd8.

15.♜g5 ♙e7 16.d5 ♜a5 17.c4 ♙a6

After 17...h6 18.♜f3, White would have excellent chances to obtain a very strong attack by playing ♖a1-d1, then removing his knight from f3 to h4 (or d2), then advancing with e3-e4 and finally f2-f4.

18.♖ad1 ♙d8 19.f4 exf4 20.♖c2!

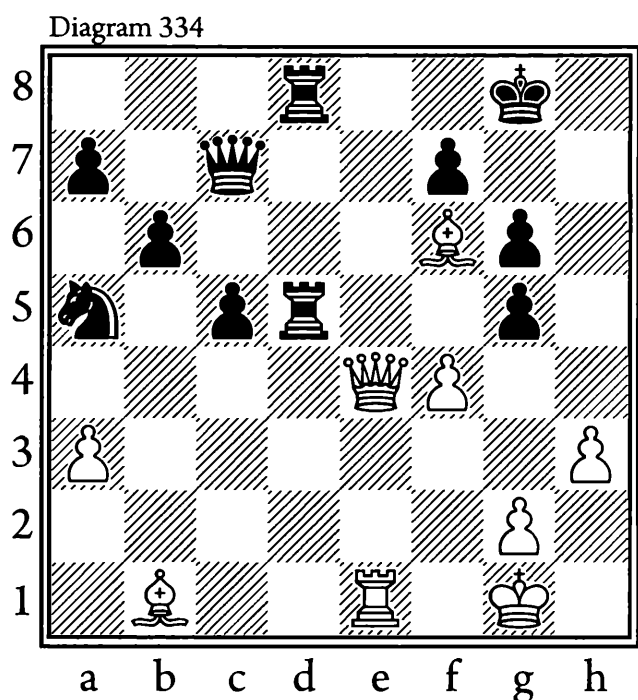
This is better than winning the exchange with 20.♙xf6 gxf6 21.♖h5 fxg5 22.♖xg5† ♜f8 23.♖h6† ♜e8 24.d6 ♖xd6 25.♖xd6.

Black's reply is forced:

20...h6 21.♙xf6 hxg5 22.♙b1 g6 23.exf4 ♙xc4 24.♖fe1

24.fxg5 ♙xf1 25.♖f2 would be met by 25...♙e2 26.♖h4 ♙h5.

24...♖ed7 25.♔e4 ♕xd5 26.♖xd5 ♖xd5



27.♔xd5! ♖f8 28.♔xg5 ♔d6 29.♔h4
1–0

Game 10

I. Lipnitsky – S. Furman

Leningrad 1953

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 a6 6.g3 e5 7.♘de2 ♘bd7

Furman is known as an openings connoisseur. As usual he chooses the best arrangement for his forces, developing his queen's bishop on b7.

A less attractive idea is 7...♗e6 8.♗g2 ♗e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.h3 b5 11.f4 b4 12.♘d5 ♗xd5 13.exd5 ♖b6† 14.♖h2 ♘bd7 15.a3 a5 16.axb4 axb4 17.♖xa8 ♖xa8 18.fxe5 ♘xe5 19.♘d4, and White's prospects are more pleasant (Lipnitsky – Geller, USSR 1949). At move 10, the immediate 10.f4 would be even more energetic; the idea is to answer 10...♖b6† 11.♖h1 ♘g4 with 12.♔d3! followed by transferring the queen to f3. White need not fear 12...♘f2† 13.♖xf2 ♖xf2, because of 14.♗e3 winning.

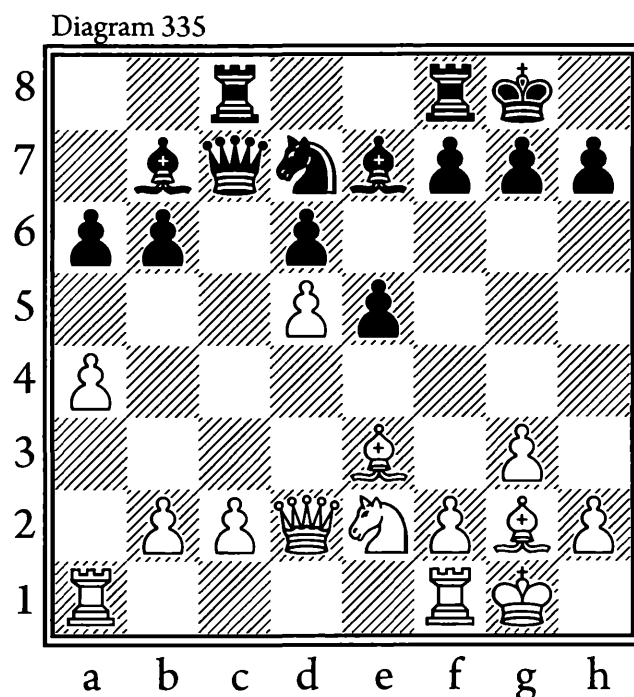
8.a4 b6 9.♗g2 ♗b7 10.0–0 ♗e7 11.♘d5

Black was already threatening 11...♘c5, for example 11.h3 ♘c5 12.f3 d5! with an excellent game.

11...♘xd5

According to some players, Black has to take on d5 with his bishop. It is hard to agree with this, as it weakens the queenside.

12.exd5 ♖c8 13.♗e3 0–0 14.♔d2 ♖c7



The opening is over. White has deployed his forces according to plan, but has not gained any advantage. A kingside attack does not promise success. Utilizing the queenside pawn majority is far from easy.

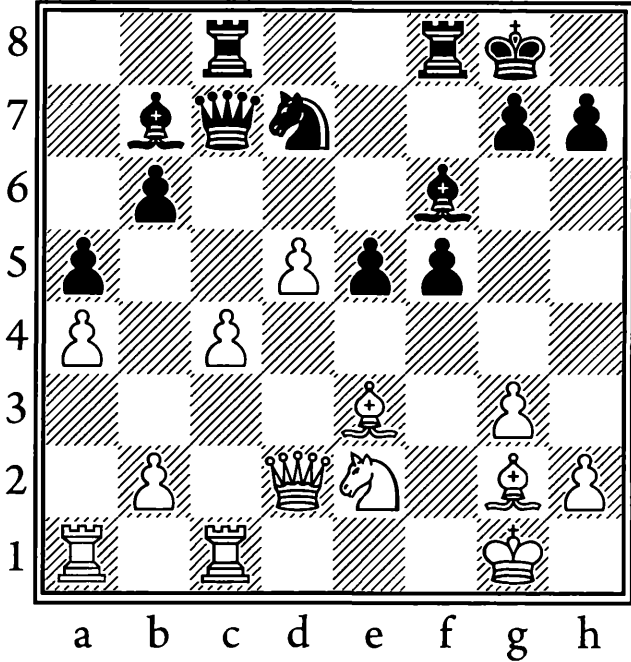
For example after 15.♖ac1 ♘c5 16.b3, the white pawns will remain “frozen” for a long time. Or if 15.c3 f5 16.f4 ♘c5 17.♖c2 e4, the white d5-pawn is surrounded.

15.♖fc1 f5! 16. f4 ♗f6 17.fxe5 dxe5

Leading to sharp, complex play. The quiet line 17...♘xe5 18.b3 ♘g4 19.♗d4 ♖ce8 gives equal chances.

18.c4 a5

Diagram 336

**19.d6!**

When a pawn like this thrusts its way into the opposing formation, it disrupts the co-ordination of the enemy pieces. Of course you have to take into account that the pawn can easily be attacked. For that reason it is most important to utilize the pawn's disruptive action as energetically as possible to create dangerous threats.

19...♖b8 20.♙d5† ♔h8 21.♖f1 g6 22.♘c3 ♙a6 23.♙e6 ♖c6

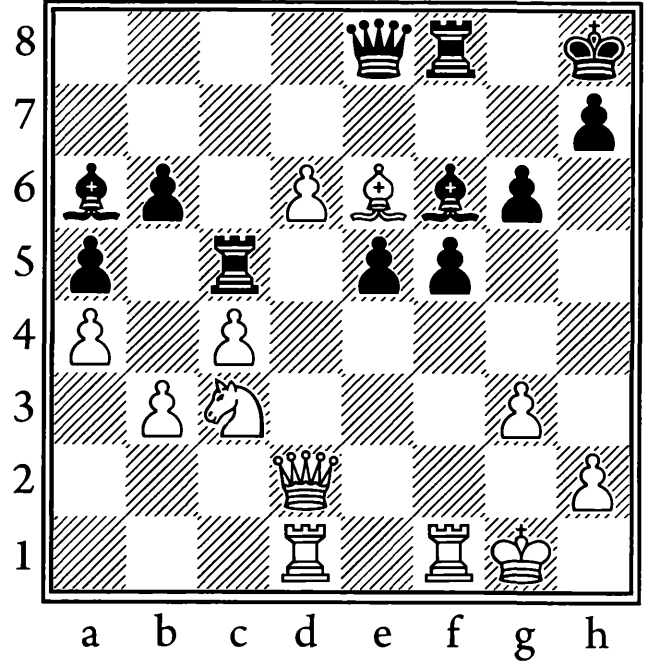
Black could not take on c4; now White cannot take the knight.

24.♖ad1 ♘c5

Furman reckons that White's dark-squared bishop is the more dangerous of the two, and brings about its exchange for the black knight. If **24...♖e8**, there could follow **25.♙xd7 ♖xd7 26.b3 ♖d8 27.♘e4 ♙g7 28.♙g5 fxe4** (or **28...♖f8 29.♙e7 ♖f7 30.♘g5**) **29.♙xd8 ♖xd8 30.d7**, and this pawn will cost Black a piece.

25.♙xc5 ♖xc5 26.b3 ♖e8

Diagram 337

**27.♙xf5!**

This combination, shattering Black's defences, relies on the strength of the white d-pawn and the fact that two black pieces (the rook on c5 and the bishop on a6) are absent from the scene.

27...gxf5 28.♖xf5 ♙g7 29.d7 ♖d8 30.♖xf8† ♙xf8 31.♖f2

Played in time trouble, this move could have made the win more complicated. After **31.♖f1!** the game would be over in a few moves: **31...♙g7 32.♖d6 ♖c7 33.♖f7**, or **31...♙e7 32.♖f7 ♙g5 33.♖d6**.

It was only after making his move that White noticed an ingenious defence for Black: **31...♖xc4! 32.♖xf8† ♖xf8 33.d8=♖ ♖c8**, making the win a good deal harder. In time trouble it would have been easy to go wrong with **34.♖xb6 ♖xc3 35.♖d8? ♖c1† 36.♔g2 ♙f1†! 37.♔g1 ♙h3†!**

31...♙e7 32.♖f7 ♙g5 33.♘e4 ♙e3† 34.♔g2 ♖c8 35.dxc8=♖ ♖xc8 36.♖d7 1-0

Game 11

I. Lipnitsky – M. Tal

USSR Team Championship, Voroshilovgrad 1955

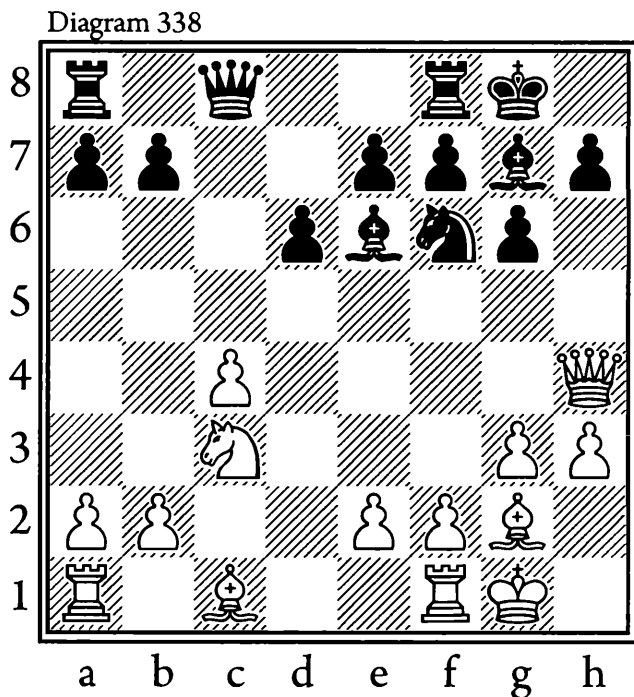
1.♖f3 ♖f6 2.d4 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.g3 0–0
5.♗g2 d6 6.0–0 c5 7.♖c3 ♖c6 8.h3 cxd4
9.♖xd4 ♖xd4 10.♗xd4 ♗e6

White is faced with the threats of 11...♗c8 attacking two pawns, or 11...♖d5 ruining his queenside.

For example if 11.♗xb7, then 11...♖d5, followed by an exchange on c3 (this is stronger than 11...♗b8 12.♗g2 ♖d5 13.♗xa7 ♖xc3 14.bxc3 ♗xc3 15.♗h6 ♗xa1 16.♗xa1 etc.).

11.♗h4 ♗c8

Now 12.♖d5 lands White in serious difficulties after 12...♗xd5 13.cxd5 ♗c2!. Fortunately he has a reply which, risky though it looks, is actually very strong.



12.b3!

Up to this point White had taken about an hour on the clock, and Black a mere ten

minutes. But now it was Tal's turn to sink into thought.

If 12...d5, then 13.♗a3! is strong. Against 12...♖e4 White sacrifices the exchange with 13.♖xe4, obtaining the better chances after 13...♗xa1 14.♗xe7 (or 14.♖g5 h5 15.g4).

Black does not profit from 12...♖d5 on account of 13.cxd5!; or from 12...♖h5 13.♗b2! ♗f6 14.♗e4 ♗xh3, in view of 15.♖d5! with an initiative for White.

12...♖g4! 13.hxg4 ♗xc3 14.♗b1

There seemed to be a strong alternative in 14.♗h6 ♗xa1 15.♗xa1 (on 15.♗xf8 ♗f6 16.g5 ♗xg5 17.♗xg5 ♖xf8 18.♗h6† ♖g8 19.♗f3 ♗b8 20.♖g2 ♗f8, Black repulses the attack while keeping his extra pawn) 15...♗e8 16.♗f3, with the idea of using the h-file for an attack on the king. However, after 16...f6 (or 16...f5) White could come away empty-handed.

14...♗xg4

Forced, in view of the threat of ♗g2-f3, ♖g1-g2 and ♗f1-h1. White would answer 14...♗f6 with 15.g5.

15.♗xe7

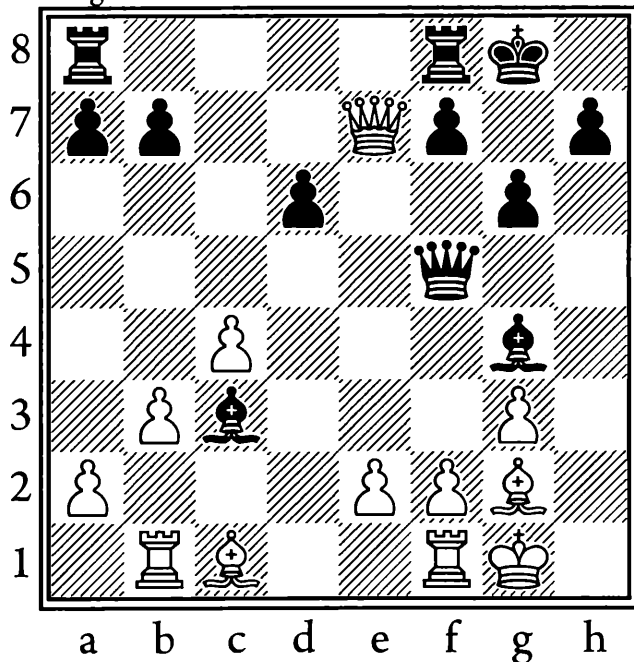
Better than 15.♗xb7, as it gives Black a weak pawn on d6.

15...♗f5

With 12...♖g4 Black was burning all the bridges behind him. If counting the weaknesses on both sides is what matters, Black will be badly off. For the moment, however, Tal succeeds in retaining the initiative. How is White to defend his rook on b1?

(See diagram next page)

Diagram 339



On 16.♔h6, Black has 16...♖fe8 17.♔xb7 ♕xe2 18.♖fc1 ♔d3 winning the exchange.

With 16.e4 White would be obstructing his own bishop without freeing himself from threats.

A better move is 16.♕e4, and if 16...♔h5 then 17.♔b2! ♕xb2 18.♖xb2 ♕xe2 19.♕xg6 fxg6 20.♔xe2 with a slight advantage to White. Or 16...♔e5 17.♔xe5 dxe5 18.♔h6, and White has the better ending.

However, Black could answer 16.♕e4 with 16...♔e6! 17.♔xe6 fxe6, after which the chances are level.

16.♔e3!

White gains an important tempo for regrouping his pieces. Now 16...♔xb1 17.♔xc3 is not good for Black.

16...♕g7 17.♕e4 ♔h5 18.♕f3

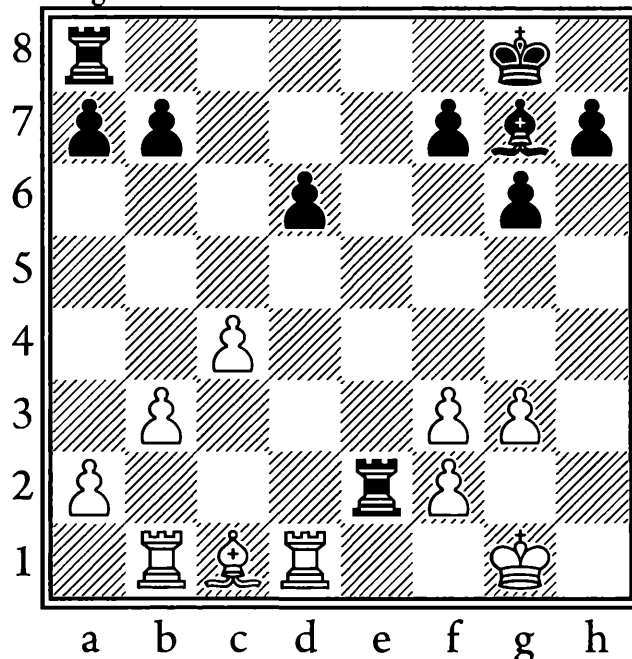
This liquidates Black's initiative for good. Instead 18.f3 would be incautious in view of 18...♕f5!, for example 19.g4 ♕xg4 etc. Now the game reduces to an ending in which the black pawn on d6 is weak.

18...♖fe8 19.♕xg4 ♔xg4 20.♔f3 ♔xf3 21.exf3 ♖e2

On 21...♕d4 22.♖d1 ♕b6 23.♔f1!, White would stop the rook from penetrating to the second rank.

22.♖d1

Diagram 340



22...♖xa2

Black hastens to get rid of his weak d6-pawn, and ... lands in an indefensible position. After 22...♕f8 23.a4 ♖ae8 24.♕e3 a6 25.♖d3, White would only retain an insignificant plus.

Curiously enough, after taking the pawn on a2 Tal assessed the position as equal and therefore offered a draw.

23.♖xd6 ♕f8 24.♖d5

24.♖d7 would be premature because of 24...♕c5.

24...a5 25.♕e3 ♖c8 26.♖bd1 ♖b2 27.♖d8 ♖xd8 28.♖xd8 ♖b1† 29.♔g2 ♔g7 30.♕d4† f6 31.♖d7† ♔g8 32.♖xb7 a4 33.c5!

This pawn ought to decide the result of the struggle.

33...♖xb3

Black also loses with 33...a3 34.c6 a2 35.c7 ♖c1 36.♗a7.

34.c6 ♖xb7

Or 34...♙d6 35.c7 etc.

35.cxb7 ♙d6 36.♙xf6 ♖f7

Black could not push his pawn to a3 on account of 37.♙e7!.

37.♙b2

A more accurate line was 37.♙d4 ♙b8 (or 37...a3 38.♙c5!) 38.f4 a3 39.♙e5 ♙xe5 40.fxe5 a2 41.b8=♚ a1=♚ 42.♚h8 with an easy win.

37...g5 38.f4

And here a simpler way was 38.♙c1 h6 39.f4 ♖g6 40.fxg5 hxg5 41.f4.

38...gxf4 39.♙c1?

Letting the win slip. When White sacrificed a pawn with 38.f4, he had in mind 39.gxf4 ♙xf4 40.♖f3 ♙b8 41.♖e4 ♖e6 42.f4 ♙a7 43.♙d4 ♙b8 44.♙e5 ♙a7 45.b8=♚ ♙xb8 46.♙xb8 with an uncomplicated win. But he succumbs to the wish for a prettier finish to this difficult game.

39...fxg3 40.fxg3 ♙b8 41.♙f4 ♙a7 42.♙e3

The sealed move.

42...♙b8 43.♙f4 ♙a7 44.♙c1

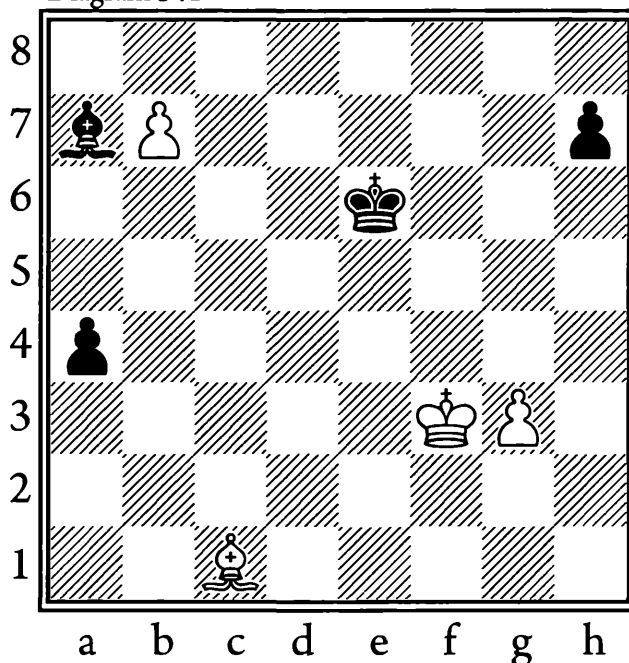
White could win the black bishop, but Black would have time to set up a drawn position. To do this, he would only need to advance his pawn and bring his king to the g6-square: 44.b8=♚ ♙xb8 45.♙xb8 a3 46.♙e5 ♖e6 47.♙c3 ♖f5 48.♖h3 h5!!

“After 44.b8=♚ ♙xb8 45.♙xb8 a3 46.♙e5 ♖e6 47.♙c3 ♖f5 48.♖h3 h5!! we reach a similar position to the one that arises in the game. Black can't be placed in zugzwang!” (Tal)

44...♖e6 45.♖f3

The adjourned position was analysed by the entire Ukrainian team. The conclusion was reached that in order to win, White must either penetrate with his king to the queenside and reach the b7-pawn or else prevent the black king from occupying g6.

Diagram 341



For example 45...♖d5 46.♙e3 ♙b8 47.♙f4 ♙a7 48.b8=♚ ♙xb8 49.♙xb8, and if now 49...♖e6, White wins by 50.♖f4 ♖f6 51.♙e5† ♖g6 52.♙b2 – since with the black pawn no nearer queening than a4, the bishop stationed on c1 can take an active part in the fight against the black king.

At move 49, Black would also lose with 49...a3 50.♖f4 a2 51.♙e5 ♖e6 52.♙a1 ♖f7 53.♖g5. However, in this variation he has an ingenious defence. After 49...a3 50.♖f4, his king needs to head towards White's g3-pawn with 50...♖d4!.

45...♖d7!

Obviously this position had been well analysed by the Rigans too. Now White cannot win a tempo by 46.♙e3 ♙b8 47.♙f4, since after 47...♙xf4! 48.gxf4 ♖c7 Black picks up the b7-pawn.

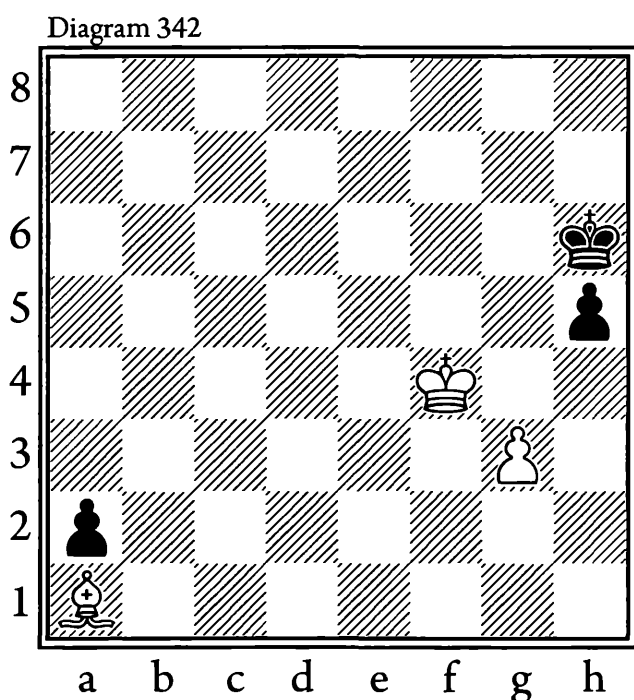
46.♙f4 a3 47.b8=♚ ♖xb8 48.♙xb8 ♔e6
49.♔f4 ♔f6

Here we see the effect of the tempo that Black gained with 45...♔d7!. If the black pawn were on a4, White would now win easily with 50.♙d6.

50.♙e5† ♔g6 51.♙a1 a2 52.♙b2

Or 52.g4 h5 53.g5 h4 54.♙f6 h3 55.♔g3
a1=♚ 56.♙xa1 ♔xg5.

52...h5 53.♙a1 ♔h6



1/2–1/2

On 54.♔f5, Black plays 54...h4 55.gxh4
♔h5.

Game 12

Y. Sakharov – I. Lipnitsky

Kiev 1958

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0–0

On his 4th move Black has a wide choice of alternatives: 4...d5, 4...c5, 4...♘c6, 4...b6 or 4...d6. With any of those moves he is largely

determining the further course of the game.

Castling (something that will have to come anyway) is a different matter. It is as if Black is saying to his opponent, “Make your move and then, depending on what it is, I’ll see what reply I will choose.”

For instance after 5.a3 ♙xc3† 6.bxc3, Black has the possibility to steer the game into the channels of a variation that suits him: 6...c5! 7.♙d3 ♘c6 8.♘e2 b6 9.0–0 ♙a6 10.e4 ♘e8! In this line he exerts lasting pressure on c4 while countering White’s aggression in the centre and on the kingside by means of a timely ♘f6–e8 and f7–f5.

5.♘ge2

The idea of this continuation is simple: after a subsequent a2–a3 White avoids the doubling of his pawns if Black should exchange on c3. Also in a number of lines White intends to develop his king’s bishop on g2, from where it will sweep the whole diagonal with its fire. A serious defect of this move is that the knight on e2 – albeit temporarily – is holding up White’s kingside development.

5...c5! 6.a3

The immediate 6.d5 can be met by 6...b5 7.dxe6 fxe6 8.cxb5 d5, with the initiative for a pawn.

6...cxd4 7.exd4

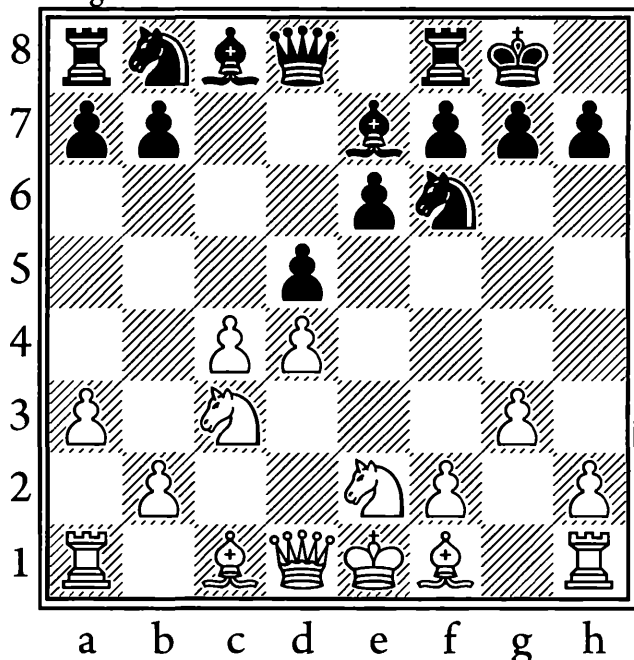
In Botvinnik – Najdorf (Alekhine Memorial Tournament, Moscow 1956) the continuation was 7.axb4 dxc3 8.♘xc3 d5 9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.♘xd5 ♚xd5 11.♚xd5 exd5 12.♙d2 ♙f5 13.♙c3, with an endgame advantage to White: two bishops, an open a-file and control of d4.

However, Black is by no means obliged to stick to such an anaemic policy of simplification. He can choose a more complicated course, for example with 9...exd5. It would then be a good

deal harder for White to bring his bishop on c1 into the game. With the open lines, Black would have adequate piece play.

7...♙e7 8.g3 d5!

Diagram 343



In chess the side that is better mobilized always has an interest in making direct contact with the opponent as quickly as possible.

9.cxd5?

White would probably do best to push his c-pawn forward to avoid the opening of lines, even though this could entail the loss of a pawn.

In that case the struggle could proceed something like this: 9.c5 b6 10.b4 a5 11.♘a4 (after 11.♗b1 bxc5 12.dxc5 axb4 13.axb4 ♘c6, Black's initiative in the centre is much more dangerous than his opponent's queenside threats; this was demonstrated, in particular, by the game Gligorić – Szabo, Helsinki 1952) 11...bxc5 12.bxc5 ♘fd7 13.♙g2 ♘c6 14.0–0 ♙f6 15.♙e3 ♙a6 16.♗e1 ♗b8, and strategically Black has bright prospects: pressure against d4 combined with play on the b-file and the a6–f1 diagonal.

9...♘xd5 10.♙g2 ♘xc3!

An important point! There was no sense in waiting for White to exchange on d5 himself, leaving a weak pawn on that square which would later come under pressure. On the other hand retreating the knight would have little justification either, as it would only get in the way of Black's other pieces.

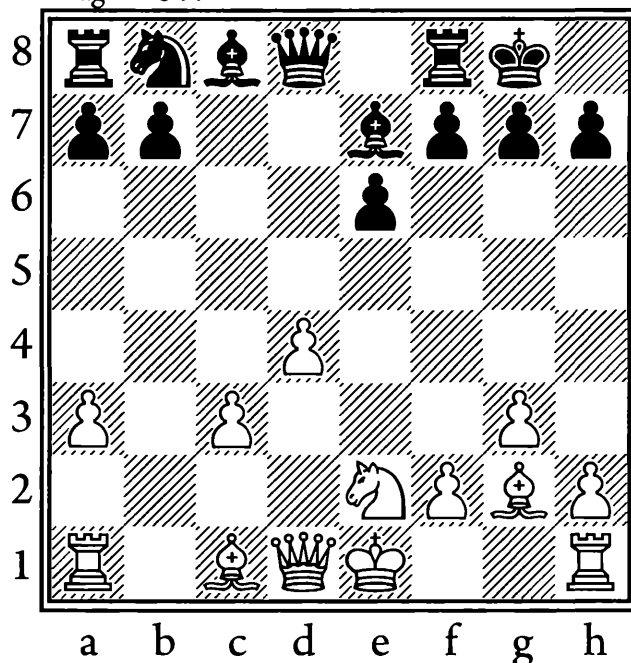
11.bxc3

After 11.♘xc3 ♙f6 12.♙e3 (or 12.d5 exd5 13.♘xd5 ♗e8†) 12...♘c6, the pawn on d4 would be a constant source of worry for White. True, it could be bolstered by 13.♘e2, but that would mean completely switching to defence while Black could calmly increase the pressure.

Black would also be left with the initiative after 13.d5 exd5 14.♗xd5 (or 14.♙xd5 ♙h3) 14...♙e6 15.♗xd8 ♗fxd8 16.0–0 ♘a5. Likewise the paradoxical 13.♙xc6 bxc6 14.0–0 would hardly secure equality, despite the fact that a weak black pawn would appear on the c-file while the white knight would have the important points e4 and c5 at its disposal.

But then, capturing on c3 with the pawn leaves Black with the better game in any case – so in the end, the question of what to capture with becomes a purely subjective problem, which can be solved according to one's own taste.

Diagram 344



The opening struggle has entered the critical phase when the essential thing is to formulate your future strategic plan precisely and clearly, and to complete your mobilization in accordance with it. If nothing has happened so far except minor clashes of the vanguard detachments, things will very soon change: once both sides have developed their forces, the real “battle” will start, and they need to prepare for it now.

White’s queenside contains holes and is badly protected: his a- and c-pawns are weak, and the complex of light squares a4/c4/b3 is vulnerable. Black’s plan is therefore clear: he endeavours to strike a blow at the weak spot in his opponent’s defence as quickly as he can.

11...♘c6 12.0–0 ♕d7 13.♘f4 ♘a5 14.♙e1 ♖c8 15.♙b1 ♖xc3

Black falls in with his opponent’s wishes, reckoning that his material plus and the good placing of his pieces will allow him to look to the future with confidence.

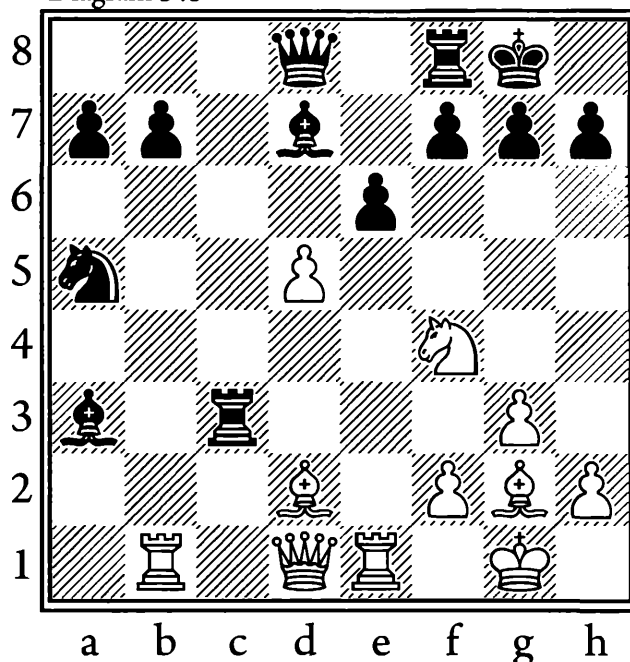
Nonetheless in principle Black’s decision is incorrect, since he risks losing the bird he already has in his hand without catching the two in the bush. He should have continued quietly with 15...b6. Then after 16.d5 e5 (16...exd5 is playable too) 17.d6 (17.♖xe5 ♕f6) 17...♕f6 18.♘d5 ♕c6 19.♘xf6† ♗xf6, the white pawn that has broken through finds itself in danger.

16.d5!

White rightly pins his hopes on this thrust.

16...♕xa3 17.♕d2!

Diagram 345



What a transformation! Three moves ago everything looked calm. Now the struggle resembles a fight on the edge of a precipice. One false step and it will all be over. Such are the colossal dynamics of chess.

However, let’s take a closer look at the position. White has not given up two pawns for nothing. Most of Black’s pieces are exposed: the a5/a3/c3 triangle is extremely vulnerable, the bishop on d7 will be molested in several lines, and the points e6 and b7 are under attack. How is Black to continue now? Where should his rook retreat to?

A bad choice is 17...♖c5 18.♙a1! ♘c4 19.♖xa3! ♘xa3 20.♕b4 ♖a5 21.dxe6 fxe6 (or 21...♕xe6 22.♗xd8 and 23.♕xa5) 22.♕xf8 and White wins, since 22...♔xf8 is met by 23.♘xe6†, and 22...♗xf8 by 23.♗xd7.

Another retreat, 17...♖c8, is also scarcely attractive in view of 18.dxe6 ♕xe6 (or 18...fxe6 19.♕xa5 and 20.♗xd7) 19.♖xe6!! fxe6 20.♘xe6, and Black has no queen move that keeps the knight on a5 defended. After 21.♘xf8 White wins at least a piece.

17...♖c4!! 18.♙a1

An appetite comes while eating. Sakharov tries to go for active play, unaware that one of his variations contains a miscalculation.

But then with limited thinking time, examining all the combinative possibilities is not easy. Curiously enough, the best solution was a purely positional line aimed at winning back one of the pawns while preserving the active placing of White's pieces: 18.dxe6 ♙xe6 19.♞xe6 fxe6 20.♞e2! ♜c8 21.♞xe6† ♜h8 22.♙e3!

18...♙b4 19.dxe6 fxe6

The only move! Black would lose a piece with 19...♙xe6 20.♙xb4 ♜xb4 21.♞xd8 and 22.♞xa5.

20.♙xb4 ♜xb4

The tactical peculiarities of the position do not permit White to exploit the precarious placing of the black pieces. For instance after 21.♞xa5 ♞xa5 22.♞xd7 ♜bxf4 23.♞xe6† ♜4f7 24.♙d5 ♜h8!, White is unable to take on f7 since his own rook on e1 is attacked.

21.♞e4 ♜xe4 22.♙xe4

The storm unleashed by White with 16.d5 has been beaten off. It would therefore perhaps have been best for him to win back one of the sacrificed pawns and seek salvation in the end-game.

Bringing his last reserves into the fray, Sakharov gives the attack a new direction. Danger to the black king is now looming. The threat is 23.♞h5, for example 22...e5 23.♞h5 h6 24.♙d5† ♜h7 25.♞g6† ♜h8 26.♙e4 etc.

22...♙c6

An attempt to hold on to both extra pawns could even lose the game for Black. Instead he now extinguishes White's initiative for good, and all that is needed afterwards is some precise technique.

23.♞c2

White remains unable to utilize the awkward placing of the knight on a5, since his own bishop is under attack. Possible variations are:

(a) 23.♞h5 ♙xe4 24.♞xe6 ♞f6 and Black wins, thanks to the threats against a1 and f2.

(b) 23.♙xh7† ♜xh7 24.♞h5† ♜g8 25.♞g6 ♞c4!, guarding e5 and thus depriving White of an attack with 26.♞h8† and 27.♞e5†.

23...♙xe4 24.♞xe4 ♞c6 25.♞b1 ♞d7 26.h4 e5 27.♞d3 ♞f7 28.♞b2 ♞f3 29.♞c4† ♜h8 30.♞c5 ♞d4 31.♞d7

White's last hope. If the black rook now moves, White plays 32.♞xe5!. But Black has prepared a devastating stroke:

31...♞e4! 32.♞c1 ♞f3† 33.♜f1 ♞d3†

33...♞xh4 also wins.

34.♜g2 ♞xd7

0-1

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